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Mark Ravenhill and Contemporary Taiwanese Political Playwriting

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In-Yer-Face in Taiwan:
Mark Ravenhill and Contemporary Taiwanese Political
Playwriting

Yung Chen Liu

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with
the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Faculty of Theatre, Film and Television

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Abstract

This thesis aims to interrogate the possibilities of a new kind of political playwriting to address the problems and conflicts of contemporary Taiwan. Drawing on existing observations and research on the problems of current Taiwanese democratic political systems, it seems that the crisis of losing Taiwanese subjectivity and nationality are growing, with both domestic and external threats. However, Taiwanese political theatre is ineffective and unable to reflect on this phenomenon; mainstream playwrights or theatrical producers seem apolitical and apathetic because of a perceived inability to change reality.

A similar circumstance can be found in works from 1990s Britain, termed by Aleks Sierz 'in-yer-face theatre'. In these works, young playwrights applied violent, erotic and disturbing images to gain unprecedented attention and demonstrate how theatre could intervene in the public sphere (Sierz, 2013: 9). Mark Ravenhill can be seen as a representative of this group, he utilizes a particular dramaturgy to present his characters from the angle of queerness: a marginal position from which to critique the dehumanizing process of capitalism. This research will explore how Ravenhill employs shocking scenarios in his writing, and the effect he desires to achieve. In those violent actions, he deliberately confuses the identities of victims and oppressors, presenting a more complicated and introspective witnessing experience to his audience, and allowing them to recognise the true face of capitalism. He asks his audience the dialectic question: how are we to survive in this imperfect world?

According to my analysis of Ravenhill's dramaturgy, which I term *the Queer's Journey*. It will bring out a valuable methodology for my own political playwriting as a practice, that adapted for the Taiwanese political context. The story will be based on true figures in the history of Taiwanese democratization and will be contrasted with the contemporary troubles and plights which the democratic government still fails to resolve or answer. By focusing on the special queer identities of those characters, I hope to reveal the fundamental issues that constrain and limit the Taiwanese people. By using provocative scenes to involve the audiences in unbearable atrocities, I hope to raise their consciousness of how to avoid the worst outcome and discover what is acceptable. By introducing Ravenhill's dramaturgy to today's Taiwan, I hope it will develop a newer philosophical and methodological model for Taiwanese in-yer-face theatre, which will bring to a new wave of political playwriting.

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Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: .  DATE:...5th September, 2020.....

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Introduction

1. Research motivation

On 18th March 2014, a political protest movement against the trade agreement with China arose in Taiwan. More than 400 protesters broke into the Legislative Yuan (Taiwanese parliament building) and occupied it for 20 days; the press named this the ‘Sunflower Movement’. During this period, when the government did not respond to their requests, dissatisfied protesters decided to occupy another government building, which led to the outbreak of violence and many students and policemen were injured. Such violence between the government and civilians on the street had not been seen since 1996 after Taiwan’s first presidential election, and thus this was widely reported on every live news channel and in the newspapers. Many well-known scholars, artists, media people and intellectuals publicly supported the protesters in their civil disobedience, and there is a mentality among my peers that it is becoming acceptable to use violence against the government authority, in the glorious Taiwanese tradition of fighting for democracy. The students in the Sunflower Movement strongly believe that they were fighting not only the Taiwanese government but also the totalitarian Chinese government behind it.

The main source of this tension is that Taiwan has a peculiar relationship with China. As an independent regime, Taiwan nevertheless faces interference from China in terms of national identity and autonomy, especially after the hawkish Jin-ping Xi became the chairman of the People’s Republic of China in 2012, and attempted to impose the ‘one-country two-systems’ model on Taiwan again, as was used in Hong Kong after 1997. This was done to symbolize China’s sovereignty over Taiwan, and Xi vowed to use military force if necessary to prevent moves toward Taiwanese independence (Chen, 2011: 602). China also uses its senior membership of the United Nations Security Council to prevent Taiwan from joining international movements or

conferences. Under its influence in the international arena, only 17 countries recognise Taiwan as a legitimate country in 2018 (Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Republic of Palau, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu in Asia-Pacific; Belize, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Guatemala, the Republic of Haiti, Honduras, the Republic of Nicaragua, Paraguay, the Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis, St. Lucia in Latin America and the Caribbean; Kingdom of Swaziland in Africa; and the Holy See in Europe).

Moreover, many economic experts and political researchers argue that an even greater threat for Taiwan is Chinese economic sanctions, because of its highly capitalized society and long-term economic stagnation. Through the rise of globalisation, the Chinese market has become the most significant commercial and trading partner for Taiwan. Therefore, large numbers of Taiwanese industries are located in China or rely on Chinese economic circles. The number of students coming to China has increased year by year, according to Chinese statistics: the number of Taiwanese students studying in China has grown from 6,000 to 12,000 in 2011-2017. A strong sense of unease and powerlessness divides Taiwanese people into two distinct attitudes: one group is indifferent and apolitical, frustrated and wants to maintain their status; the other is radical and patriotic, intent on confronting China and achieving independence. This is reflected in the Sunflower Movement notion of ‘de-Chinalization’ (as like de-Sinofication). Society was divided into two ideological groups supporting the government or protesters, pro-China and anti-China, constantly colliding with each other. However, in the absence of consensus, one may feel that the spirit of democracy and the rule of law, which this country has finally constructed, are being stripped away layer by layer; and that the power of politicians no longer comes from the proper governance of the country, but whether their ideological beliefs are pleasing. The opposing camp is no longer considered as fellow-nationals with

different opinions, but more like an enemy. Meanwhile, it is foreseeable that the situation will deteriorate, even without Chinese aggressive moves. Taiwanese democracy may defeat itself. As an eyewitness of this phenomenon, my research idea was conceived as a Taiwanese playwright to interrogate the possibilities of a new method of political playwriting to address the existing problems of current Taiwanese political systems, which I believe mainly come from the threatening crisis of losing Taiwanese subjectivity and identity. This is what I have decided to write about. The question is how?

2. Methodological considerations

In order to discuss these topics in detail, I must explain two questions first. 1) What is the complicated relationship between China and Taiwan? 2) What role did political theatre play during the process of Taiwanese democratization, and why is it crucial in constructing or repairing Taiwanese subjectivity? In the meantime, I have to reference and quote a lot of materials and scripts from Mandarin into English, and I personally do the translation throughout the thesis.

I tied these questions together in my first chapter *The crisis of Taiwanese political theatre*, and briefly introduce the modern history of Taiwan, which started in 1945 when the Japanese colony of Taiwan was given back to its motherland, the Republic of China (ROC). However, in 1949 the ROC government was defeated by Communist China, and with the help of the United States retreated to Taiwan; since then the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China (China) have followed two very different political routes. However, the Republic of China, which rules Taiwan, is a government that takes its authority from the constitution. The Chinese government reasoned that the civil war was not over, promoted militarized management in Taiwan, and trying to assimilate Taiwanese identity. This regime was

recognized by the Taiwanese as worse than the previous autocratic Japanese authority. The conflict between native Taiwanese and Chinese mainlanders was inevitable and constant (see Brown, 2004; Wachman, 1994). This was called the White Terror and thousands of people were killed, tortured or imprisoned, especially Taiwanese intellectuals and dissenters. However, after a long and difficult fight over forty years, along with changes in international politics, the Chinese government ended martial law in 1987. This was followed by the iconic student movement ‘Wild Lily’ in 1990. The government made concessions again and abolished the rest of ‘*Temporary provisions effective during the period of national mobilization for suppression of the Communist rebellion*’. It also established the first direct election of the president in 1996. Thus has Taiwan implemented democracy (Yang, 2016: 340).

In the second part of Chapter One, I consider how the process of Taiwanese democratization was accompanied by Taiwanese political theatre. After the political theatre was liberated from the control and censorship of martial law, Taiwanese writers began to pursue our common subjectivities, in response to contemporary identity anxieties and uncertainties. As a part of the anti-communist force, the ROC government had been receiving military and economic assistance from the United States since 1949, which resulting in a pro-US and pro-Western (anti-communist, in a broad sense) atmosphere in Taiwanese society. Even if the government continued to exercise authoritarian martial law, its ideology tended towards Westernization, democracy and freedom. Therefore, in order to develop Taiwan’s relatively backward literary culture, the ROC government sent large numbers of international students to study in America. In the early ’80s, in the government-led modern theatrical movement, those students, some of whom are now scholars and professors of political theatre, started to introduce modern Western playwrights such as Brecht, Pinter and Beckett, along with analysing their works, creative dramaturgy and political criticism,

and to create Taiwanese political writing with original plays and contexts. This period of political theatre can be termed the first generation of political theatre in Taiwan and attained wide acclaim, based on the special political background of generational nostalgia for China. It brought out the most famous Taiwanese troupe (The Performance Workshop) and its classic play *The Peach Blossom Land* (1986). This generation of political theatre still mainly cooperated with the ideology of the government. However, as society became more and more liberated and civic consciousness rose, more new troupes with students as their mainstays emerged, and began to participate directly in social movements, and in the face of authoritarianism. I term this the second generation of political theatre in Taiwan, in which many small political theatres fought for democracy, and call themselves the ‘Little Theatre’ movement. However, after its golden age in the ’80s, political theatre drastically reduced in influence after the 90s, as German scholar Klaus Peter Muller says: ‘political plays present negative situations in order to elicit social and political changes. Where change is not desired, there is no space for political theatre’ (Muller: 2002, 15-18). The implementation of democracy symbolizes how political theatre lost its critical object of the totalitarian government. Also during this period, Taiwanese people were satisfied with democratic politics and economic growth as society moved towards a more market-oriented consumer structure. Therefore, since career opportunities in theatre are very limited, talented writers were forced to pursue careers in the film and television industry, writing about less controversial topics. The once-popular Little Theatre disappeared and was replaced by a new type of political theatre combined with commercial culture.

In the last part of Chapter One, I describe both internal and external and influences that have led me to believe that we need a new type of political writing to reflect our modern dissatisfaction and anxieties. The first reason for this is that, after

the liberation of Taiwan in 1987, cultural exchange between the two sides of the strait gradually warmed up. In the early 1990s, it reached a peak, as in the International Shakespeare Festival in Shanghai in 1994. Guo-Xiu Li led the Ping-Fong Acting Troupe coproduced with Shanghai Modern Drama Club and *Shamlet* became the first Taiwanese political play performed in China. However, any Taiwanese political play needed to accept the dogma that ‘One China cannot be divided’. In other words, it had to be censored. Under the conceptual framework of ‘Chinese Drama’, Taiwan’s modern theatre will be regionalized and treated in tandem with the two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao, losing their own voices (Yu, 2011: 65-67). For example, Sheng-Chuan Lai of the Performance Workshop performed *Treasure Island Village* (2008) and *Dream of Dreams* (2005) in China, but deleted many political elements to comply with Chinese regulations (See Yan, 2013). Successful theatres have become more and more commercial and lost the ability to be critical. In the year 2000, with a local Taiwanese party taking the power for the first time, some political theatres began to focus on the history of oppression, political events and figures. They applied for governmental funding, focused on supporting minority rights and treated the previous government as the villain.

In my observation, the greatest contemporary Taiwanese political playwright who responds to our times by describing the powerlessness of this generation is Wei-Ran Chi. He uses sarcastic dramaturgy to speak of the spiritual state of the Taiwanese; the political parties have rotated, but unemployment and economic decline worsened, and the media is indiscriminate. The government has no integrity, and it is common to see murders or entire families committing suicide on the news (See Hong, 2006). Chi’s characters consider the contrast between reality and ideals, coupled with an inability to change reality; gradually, they only complain and are not willing to try to change. Chi describes these characters as those whose limbs are still alive, but their

hearts are already stiff and paralyzed. Though the plot may be closely related to the status of Taiwan, the internal world of these characters reflects the powerlessness of the Taiwanese confronting all kinds of loss, and gradually changes from a feeling of powerlessness to numbness and paralysis. Chi proposed that the most political conflicts and confrontations in Taiwan, the consciousness and identity actions of various ethnic groups, are often the fuses or sparks that lead to greater things. Taiwan seems to be arguing endlessly. Facts are often distorted under the manipulation of ideology. More importantly, Chi argues that the Taiwanese have a unique and compassionate recognition of the Other, and a tendency to regard themselves as Others. Chi believes that this is wishful thinking on the part of the Taiwanese, related to the loss of our subject and a subconscious desire for equal recognition. However, even though Chi identifies the problem, he is unable to come up with a solution; he can only stand in the ruins. Chi's works are like the best satirical cartoon: sensational and laughable, but ultimately fails to confront the problems it describes, such as the disintegration of identity and the violence that occurs in the quest for democracy.

As I discuss at the end of Chapter one, there are still many political plays that respond to the predicament of Taiwan in this year. Mo-Lin Wang's *Wilderness* (2011) mourns the unpaid youth of its characters. Wong, as a left-wing political writer, hides behind his mournful characters and gives this play realistic energy; however, there is still nowhere to go. At the end of the play, one of the characters wants to go back to his hometown to think quietly, and the other ends his life. Wong believes that the memories of that era have become the ghost of displacement, forgotten; on the other hand, he still thinks political writing must be able to break through the current false, smooth fictions. In *You Can't Use That* (2013), Zi-Ling Peng and Shao-Qun Wang reflect the revolutionary voice through the 'Wild Strawberry Movement' in 2008. The characters are four participants in the movement: a student, a retired journalist, an

unemployed person and a homeless person. They represent the complexity and absurdity of the 'student' movement to highlight political manipulation. Others, like Yi-Chen Zhou's *The Rose Colored Country* (2013), Wan-Ting Shen and Hui-Min Ruan's *Siro Heros- Taiyuan Events* (2017) are also introduced in Chapter One.

However, while most plays focus on the conflict and sense of helplessness in either the confrontation of historical events or political movements, this research offers a different angle in terms of the reason behind those issues. When the old subjectivity is denied, it is incapable of establishing a new alternative; and because of the fundamental conflict of ideologies, unscrupulous means are sought in the name of justice. To my knowledge there is no extended investigation of playwriting based on the Sunflower Movement to further exemplify the identity crisis and the flaws of democracy; as a playwright, I know the difficulty for authors in writing about such topics. It is much easier to accuse a lost totalitarian government that cannot respond, and it is extremely difficult to confront the ideologies supported by most public opinion or let the audience reflect that they might also be a part of the oppressor's system. Thus, this study aimed to give a new perspective on what methods should be used to communicate between the people and their government; when violence occurs repeatedly, how should society respond? To answer these questions, I construct a common identity as the first step to build consensus; I attempt to arouse the Taiwanese audience's passion for frustrated political issues and feel obliged to create change. Therefore, the first time I read Mark Ravenhill's plays, they seemed to offer the answer I have been looking for. In Chapter Two, I will further analyze Ravenhill's dramaturgy, as I describe the 'Queer's Journey' and how can it be used to address Taiwan's situation in Chapter Four.

3. The structure of Mark Ravenhill's Dramaturgy

In Chapter Two, I introduce Ravenhill's appearance in the mid-1990s, during a period termed by Aleks Sierz as 'in-yer-face' theatre; many young playwrights were from the generation known as 'Thatcher's children', who faced free-market economics and the dominant neo-liberal ideology after the Cold War (Sierz, 2001: 238). This inspired rude, sexually explicit, and often violent, erotic and disturbing images in their plays to gain unprecedented attention or commented on a fractured and dysfunctional society, which demonstrates how theatre could intervene in the public sphere. They wrote blatant, aggressive, emotionally dark plays to rage against the age as dominated by capitalism and imperialism (Sierz, 2013: 9); playwright and scholar Ken Urban argues that the generation of new playwrights in the 90s 'Use cruelty as a means of both reflecting and challenging the despair of contemporary urban life shaped by global capitalism and cultural uniformity' (Urban: 2008, 39). As the term 'in-yer-face' implies, audiences were being forced to see something unwelcome close up: their personal space has been invaded and they are forced to reassess their responses and recognise who they really are.

In Taiwan, Sarah Kane (another playwright from the 'in-yer-face' representatives) is quite well known and schools and theatres often perform her works. Unfortunately, Kane's premature death in 1999 leaves only a few masterpieces for study; and the themes she deals with of redemptive love, sexual desire, pain, physical and psychological torture or death even had achieved canonical status. However, relatively speaking, it is still some distance away from the real-life experience of most Taiwanese audiences and performers. Compared to Kane, Ravenhill is less famous in Taiwan. But during the research I found the topic Ravenhill mostly wrote about was dehumanization caused by capitalism and commercialization in the UK; to a certain extent, it is quite consistent with Taiwan's

early economic development experience in the same period. The early 90s were a period of a deep recession, with rising unemployment in both working class and middle class life, with the so-called ‘brain drain’ of scientists leaving Britain, as well as the privatisation of national services and rises in crime rates. Ravenhill says in an interview in *Theatre Forum* that there are two main reasons he started writing in 1993: one, it was the year his boyfriend died of AIDS; and two, the murder of Jamie Bulger. Two ten-year-olds, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, kidnapped three-year-old James Bulger from a shopping centre. They abused him and murdered him, leaving his body on a railway line. Therefore, his play is like an indication of broader social deterioration. By showing the loss of political idealism and the cruel face of society, Ravenhill asks his audience whether we prefer to return to memories of the past, or immerse ourselves in capitalism. Ravenhill never offers an easy answer to his audience, but urges them to find their way themselves.

This way of forcing the audience to find answers on their own responds to the needs of the problematic Taiwanese political environment: for many years we accepted Francis Fukuyama’s idea of ‘the end of history’ (1989) which implies that democratic capitalism is the end-point of humanity’s ideological evolution and the universalization of liberal democracy is the pinnacle of human government (Hutton, 2014). I want to ask the Taiwanese audience the same question. The strategy of ‘in-yer-face’ theatre is to depict the most disturbing cruelties or brutal scenes to engage their audience, making them feel the necessity or obligation to make change. This can be traced back to earlier British political writers such as Edward Bond and Howard Brenton, who went against the conservative middle-class tastes of their audiences to challenge the old morality and social structure (see Nicholson, 2012; Megson, 2012). Therefore, I use Edward Bond as a comparator at the beginning of Chapter Two. For Bond, an unjust society that contains things such as class differences will create a

false morality, causing inevitable tragic outcomes such as the killing of a baby or cannibalism. Bond called this the ‘Aggro-effect’ (Sierz, 2001: 19) and it is used to provoke his audience to ask why the world of the play is as it is and how it could be changed. I explain in *on violence in political theatre* in Chapter Two how Ravenhill is influenced by Bond’s political theory. However, Bond was writing during the Cold War and the threat of apocalyptic nuclear war, whereas Ravenhill is confronting the Soviet Union as it disintegrated, Western capitalism and democracy. So in Bond’s plays, the younger generation gradually loses their humanity and become indifferent. Bond suggests that the oppressors in his plays are simultaneously victims, because they live in a world without solutions other than violence. Ironically, in Ravenhill’s time faith had been lost in left-wing political ideology and flourishing open-market consumerism was embraced. Again, sometimes his victims simultaneously play the role of oppressors, because they fail to make proper decisions. Ravenhill emphasizes the contemporary individuality of characters in his plays, who need to take the whole responsibility for what they did or did not do, but they also lack a reliable ideology and a universal set of values. Therefore, these characters ultimately lose their ability to make choices. For example, in *Shopping and Fucking* (1996), a simple choice is perceived as an insuperable dilemma when Robbie asks a customer if he prefers a hamburger with or without cheese. The man is not able to choose and attacks Robbie with a plastic fork.

I term this particular dramaturgy in Ravenhill’s plays, as well as numerous texts both before and after this period, the *Queer’s Journey*, which I borrowed from Joseph Campbell’s *Hero’s Journey*. It comprises four phases and builds his particular storytelling technique and dialectical debates. In the first phase (*queerness as political identity*), Ravenhill depicts realistic portrayal of marginal young characters: lost, lonely, behaving problematically and constrained by the pressure of capitalism. Most

of them are fully aware of their special identity as queer, and feel unsatisfied or nostalgic for an old, lost memory when they wander or drift in urban modern culture (Ravenhill, 2006a: 134). In order to integrate into commercialized society, these queer characters will be forced to make decisions either to compromise, escape or struggle for survival within the depersonalized and dehumanized political domain. However, no matter what they encounter as the result of their choices this is still the first step of individuals who recognize that they need to take responsibility for their decisions.

Here, I must emphasize that Ravenhill's characters are not categorised by their sexuality, nor is their sexuality questioned or threatened. It is Ravenhill's recognition of the diversity of human sexuality that takes place within the postmodern landscape; in an interview with Aleks Sierz in 2000, Ravenhill rejects the idea that he is a gay playwright writing for gay audiences ('For a long time, gay playwrights were expected to be witty, warm-hearted and feel-good') and suggests that audiences have moved on from expecting a 'coming out speech or AIDS-related plot'. By rejecting the word 'gay' and adopting the word 'queer' he is one of the first playwrights to present his audiences with a concept of sexuality that is fluid and beyond convenient definition; he refused to be categorised within the boundaries that had been constructed by the dominant heterosexist culture. In other words, he writes for a new generation that doesn't feel the need to be protective about the terms with which it defines itself. As director Neil Bartlett points out, Ravenhill's characters 'live in an imaginative world in which lesbians, gay men, heterosexuals and bisexuals actually have equal dramatic status' (Bathurst, 2005: 207-214). Ravenhill uses concepts of gender and sexuality in ways that are challenging and unsettling for both gay and straight audience members.

In the second phase (*the traumatic past*), as Ravenhill uses queer characters as a symbol of those who have been expelled to the edge by their society; he emphasizes

the importance of individual stories and the uniqueness of personal experience; and sets up a traumatic background or incident of those characters to explain their behavior or ideology, often associated with violence. Memories of abuse may cause the queer to be indifferent, masochistic or suicidal; or they might be obsessed with using violence to distract themselves from their own dissatisfactions. Here, as my supervisors reminded me many times, I want to make it clear that there is no intention of bringing any discriminatory or preconceived vision to illustrate Ravenhill's writings; the 'trauma-queerness' link here is not a causal relationship, but a design he applies to some particular characters that lead them to behave differently from those around them. This set up is crucial and inspiring, because the author himself is a homosexual, but he also holds critical views of identity or ideology, arguing that being relatively weak or from a minority in society is not an excuse for doing whatever you want. If we are superficially self-censored by reasons of political correctness to express our support for queerness, queers may be forced to immerse themselves in and rejoin the dominant culture, into which they might ultimately be assimilated or absorbed, losing part of their uniqueness.

The third phase is *witness and suffering*. In this particular writing strategy, Ravenhill depicts suffering; unlike Bond, he is not focused on the view of the victims but on other queer figures who witness or participate in the atrocities. He reveals how easily they might be able to stop the outrages or avoid the worst outcome, but (because of the defect in those characters' personalities) they fail to do so. Eventually, Ravenhill presents a peculiar phenomenon as victims or powerless characters become part of the oppressing systems and are forced to commit violence. In these cruel scenes, Ravenhill deliberately confuses the identities of victims and oppressors, presenting a more complicated and introspective witness experience to his audience, further provoking them to accept responsibility for making a political difference, and

suggesting that witnesses that do nothing are somehow equal to accomplices. In the final phase of *survival as a political tactic*, Ravenhill criticizes the dehumanizing effects of the growth of globalism and capitalism, he's also pessimistic. As critic Michael Billington describes, he is from the disillusioned post-Thatcher generation struggling to make sense of a world without religion or ideology. The market and capitalism is the only thing that certainly exists, as Brian says in *Shopping and Fucking*: 'It's not perfect, I don't deny it. We haven't reached perfection. But it's the closest we've come to meaning. Civilization is money. Money is civilization' (85). At first glance, Ravenhill is ambiguous: his works contain victims, abusers, violence, torture, death and grim pictures of contemporary life, but he never offers a concrete solution (Dogan, 2014: 54), leaving the audience to find their own answers. Ravenhill offers a method of compromised improvement. Through inspecting how the queer identity contrasted with the dominant and fossilized social structure, he presents different subjectivities from where and what those characters have come from. These invisible commonalities bond those queer characters with each other. At the end of the *Queer's Journey*, it has given a metaphorical redemption of the world, composed of queers who survived.

4. My practice plays and analysis

Chapter Three in this thesis is my playwriting practice, *Voting and Fucking*, which criticizes contemporary political problems and the democratic crisis in Taiwanese society, as introduced in Chapter One: citizens participate in national governance through election and voting. However, under the current system of party politics, too much power is given to special interests or ideological groups. In the name of 'revitalizing the economy', the liberal economy has recaptured resources from the country, and gathered them together in the hands of a few elites or capital owners.

This has caused a relative sense of deprivation for most people, who feel that they have become marginalized in politics. This position, as Jacques Rancière describes it, is ‘the part of no part’, and led me to connect the situation in Taiwan with the adaptation of Ravenhill’s dramaturgy, *the Queer’s Journey*, as illustrated in Chapter Two. Chapter Four consists of commentaries and critical descriptions of the play *Voting and Fucking*, focused on the methodology of applying *the Queer’s Journey* in my play and analysis of why this queer identity might work in contemporary Taiwan political discourse. Here, to facilitate the readers of this thesis, I will combine the plot and the analysis in the following discussion.

The structure of *Voting and Fucking* adapts one of Ravenhill’s trademarks of depicting two intertwining storylines as he juxtaposes characters from different generations to explore their conflicting ideologies (De Buck, 2009: 63). Thus, one storyline takes the conflict of the Sunflower Movement as the background: when a group of protesting young people who opposed a bill broke into a government building and decide to occupy it as a stronghold. However, with the help of the internet, they suddenly became the heroic objects of worship, and more and more people join the movement. The main characters here are twins, GREEN and BLUE (all characters’ names in the play are capitalized in the thesis), which represents the divided Taiwan. They become accidentally involved in a terrorist attack and drug dealing. However, eventually the protest ended and the leaders reached a consensus with the government and decided to retreat. GREEN finally decides to blow up the building to create change. The other storyline is about the twins’ mother LILIAN, who is running for mayoral election. LILIAN represents the typical model from the Taiwanese student movement in the 80-90s who has successfully overthrown the totalitarian old government, entered politics and got a good position. As time passes these new politicians became more and more like those people they once opposed.

Her ex-husband MARK was also a radical protester, and was in prison for years because of involvement in bomb attacks in the past. Now he is released but also ruined. He can only find a job under LILIAN's help, to be a guard for a government building, which is later occupied. LILIAN's husband TOM is a high-ranking police officer. The relationship between husband and wife looks pretty good, but there had been a scandal in which BLUE accused TOM of sexually assaulting him. However, LILIAN chose to believe her husband and send BLUE to psychotherapy. Throughout the play, LILIAN is running many kinds of political campaigns, TV programme or live shows, but does not see BLUE and GREEN. In her world, being elected is the only way she can contribute to society and news that is conducive to the election is immediately absorbed by her as a tool for canvassing, including TOM's death. When she finds that TOM is dead, for example, she speaks to the voters instead of rushing to the hospital.

These two storylines both reference to true figures, activities or phenomena in the history of Taiwanese democratization. The intersection of the two lines is at the point at which GREEN is injected with drugs, falls into a coma and meets her political idol, the martyred CHRIS. CHRIS is adapted from the Taiwanese legendary figure, Nan-Rong Zheng, who fought and sacrificed himself for freedom of speech in 1989. When the court summoned him to be charged with rebellion, he refused to go and self-immolated in his office. This arrangement of revolutionaries from different times and spaces is encountered in a magical scene; the purpose is to make the political 'others' see each other. I hope to achieve the disenchantment of those revolutionary ideals through the exchange at this moment. When GREEN meet a 'real' CHRIS, she is a crying and trembling weak female reluctant to commit her self-immolation. This is what I want to respond to in the imaginary victim who identifies as kinds of traumatized experience in which Taiwanese all shared a long-term struggle and fight

with the totalitarian regime; those memories of the traumatic past shaped the fight for freedom or confronting authority. People may easily ignore these heroic behaviours and they may not necessarily be inspected or controlled. Therefore, they will not be responsible for whatever damage they caused.

Setting the older generation alongside young idealistic students in this play is done mainly to discuss the problems of violence. As mentioned, the serious challenge of contemporary Taiwan's political condition is the increasing powerful threat from communist China, both economically and militarily; the obvious strength disparity has awakened people's dislike of authoritarianism and resistance of this regime. The Taiwanese react aggressively as like GREEN, or like BLUE, who is apolitical and indifferent (Chen, 2001: 600). This indecision handicaps the ability of the Taiwanese to reach a consensus on what constitutes our own identity. However, this doesn't mean what Nan-Rong Zheng or CHRIS sacrificed themselves for was not important; the real question is, as CHRIS asks GREEN, before she burns herself to death, does she enjoy the democratic world? GREEN feels unable to answer and could only lie. This leads to her final decision to blow up the building to compensate for this lie. However, BLUE shows up in the lobby of the building to be detonated. BLUE admits his feelings to their stepdad, Tom; the memory of the sexual abuse is dim, but he recognizes that he had been influenced by the traumatic memories of childhood too much. He tells GREEN that he wants to let go, so she can let go too; and now he is going to stay with her, no matter what, because she's the only one left who will embrace him. This connection actually takes GREEN back from the edge of despair, therefore, just before the explosion is the first time in the play GREEN feels a sense of peace.

Introducing Ravenhill's dramaturgy to Taiwan was a challenge for me as a playwright, as his plays definitely push the boundary between provoking and

offending in political theatre. However, Ravenhill holds that this practical method of elimination can cause people to reach a common expectations on how to avoid the worst outcome, and to recognize the callous reality they live in and seek ways to alter it. Especially, for controversial issues, the audience must be provoked into feeling that they must participate; as I described before, this play is based on the disturbing feelings I had when witnessing the violence behind the Sunflower Movement on TV, when those young people broke windows, used chairs to block the door, and intimidated the police. I suddenly feel those young people are going to erase something very valuable from our history. As stated in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), Taiwan has shared the same language, religion and culture as China throughout history, but its unique historical experience and political opposition have prompted the formation of a new national imagination; however, under the framework of the ROC this identity has not become a common value yet. Under Chinese oppression, in order to establish this new community of Taiwan, some of Taiwanese repeated the horrors of the past, even attempting recolonization and the appropriation of Taiwanese national history as a whole. This reminds me of characters in Ravenhill's plays who are helpless or give in to the outside world, they are easily attracted to things that can cause sensory changes and distract them from the bleakness of modern life. This is accompanied by images of cruelty or violence, as Ravenhill forces the audience to recognize the process and consequences of his characters' choices. He offers a broad perspective of watching and sensing from a queer angle and recognizes the historical context of every decision, which is the first step to any possible improvement. Perhaps this is the right time to introduce Ravenhill to Taiwanese people and let his plays and dramaturgy question them about the core values they hold and those that they want to change, forcing them to reflect on themselves and seek opportunities to make this country a better place. What do we

need to protect and how can we pass on our freedoms to the next generation of Taiwanese? This is also the final step of Ravenhill's *Queer's Journey*, which emphasizes survival and doing our part to make the world better.

Chapter 1: The crisis of Taiwanese political theatre

1-1 The political background of Taiwan and the origin of modern Taiwanese theatre

To discuss the crisis of modern Taiwanese political theatre, it is necessary to understand the particular political circumstances of Taiwan, and the intertwined historical relationship between Taiwan and China. The relationship between political history and the political theatre has always been close and each is influenced by the other. Thus, they must be discussed side-by-side. Taiwan is an island separated from mainland China by only 162 kilometers of the Pacific Ocean. The total area is 36,193 km² (slightly bigger than Belgium but smaller than Switzerland), and the population was around 23 million in 2016. In the seventeenth century, Dutch and Spanish colonists reached the island and recruited Chinese immigrants to reclaim the land from aboriginal and Chinese immigrant communities. After the Ming Dynasty in China was superseded by the Qing Dynasty, the exiled Chinese general Chen-Gong Zheng forced the colonists to leave with his powerful navy and set up a rebel base in Taiwan. It was called the Kingdom of Tung-Ning (1662-1683), which symbolizes the order of the Ming Dynasty in Taiwan, as a continuation of Chinese orthodoxy but also in exile. However, shortly after Zheng's passing, the island was annexed by the Qing Dynasty for twenty years, which officially started the incorporation of Taiwan into Chinese territory. The Qing Dynasty did not value Taiwan initially, and even considered removing all the Chinese residents of the island. However, after the invasive Sino-French War (1884-1885), the Qing Dynasty began to realize the importance of Taiwan's commercial location and strategic position and declared Taiwan a Chinese province in 1885.

The Qing Dynasty ruled Taiwan from 1684 for 212 years, and ceded Taiwan to Japan after losing the Sino-Japanese War, ended by the Treaty of Shimonoseki (Yang, 2016). Heng Lian, a Taiwanese historian, wrote *General History of Taiwan* (1920) as the first broad history book about Taiwan as a unique subject, recording in detail the historical identity and roots in China from the seventeenth century, and the indescribable loss of being ceded by the motherland. Unwilling to accept the outcome of diplomacy, a group of pro-Qing high officials and local squires proclaimed Taiwan an independent country, named the Republic of Formosa (*Taiwan Minzhuguo*) on 25th May 1895. This can be regarded as the first time Taiwan declared itself collectively Taiwanese. Although the rebellion was quickly repressed, guerrilla fighting continued until about 1902 and ultimately took the lives of 14,000 Taiwanese. Japan took total control of the island in the summer of 1895 and began 50 years of colonial rule.

In *Through Formosa: An account of Japan's Island Colony* (1989), Owen Rutter describes his observations in Taiwan, as officials determined to showcase the 'enlightened' nature of the Japanese colonial government and to profit from the colony. They introduced railroads and transportation networks, accompanied by an extensive sanitation system and formal education. This brought Taiwanese society into early modernization and industrialization, with the resources and efficiency the Japanese brought to bear in Taiwan, making it comparatively more advanced than any other Chinese province at the time. However, compared to the Japanese, the Taiwanese and indigenous populations were classified as second- and third-class citizens, with fewer rights than Japanese immigrants. The Japanese government began an island-wide assimilation project to bind the colonial islands in the Pacific more firmly to the Japanese Empire in preparation for war with China. The Taiwanese were taught to see themselves as Japanese under the imperialized movement (*Kominka Movement*). During this period, the Taiwanese were encouraged to adopt Japanese

surnames and confined to speaking and writing in Japanese (Ma, 2002: 4). At the same time, Taiwanese intellectuals started to fight for positions in Japanese governance and/or military. The Taiwanese have made significant changes to their Chinese-based identity. For example, during World War II, tens of thousands of Taiwanese served in the Japanese military and government agencies in north China (*Manchukuo*) as the agent of the colonial sovereign.

Following the Japanese surrender to the Allies in 1945, the Cairo Declaration declared Taiwan returned to the Republic of China (ROC). General Yi Chen from the ROC took over the full administration and military forces of Taiwan; however, this new government was less modern and disciplined than the previous Japanese authority. The corruption and monopoly of the mainlanders brought back memories of classification and exploitation; cultural and linguistic conflicts between these two groups quickly led to the loss of popular support for the ROC regime. Increasing tension between the Taiwanese people and newly-arrived Chinese mainlanders was inevitable and constant (Brown, 2004; Wachman, 1994). This came to a head with the shooting of a civilian on 28th February 1947, when policemen tried to seize an illegal cigarette from a Taiwanese female vendor and accidentally shot an innocent passer-by. This triggered an island-wide riot, referred to as the ‘28th February incident’ (Shackleton, 1998; Wu, 2006). Allan J. Shackleton, a New Zealand officer with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, witnessed the events first-hand, and wrote *Formosa Calling: An Eyewitness Account of the February 28th, 1947 Incident* (2017). He describes the brutal approach adopted by the government. George H. Kerr was a US expert on Taiwan and lived there both during the Japanese era and the ROC takeover. In *Formosa Betrayed* (1965), he provides a comprehensive first-hand account of the incident and the following massacre. Protestors in different cities began indiscriminate attacks on the mainlanders and even captured the armory in

Kaohsiung to confront the national army. Local intellectuals seized the opportunity to set up the 'Committee of 28th February incident', making 42 requests to negotiate with Yi Chen to express their discontent at political discrimination towards the Taiwanese (Wu, 2008:12). Yi Chen placated the angry crowd by promising he would receive their demands and eliminate differential treatment; however, clandestinely he asked for military support from China to quash the revolt. After Chinese troops landed, they wiped out the rebel force and murdered huge numbers of civilians and innocents; mainstream estimates of the number killed range from 18,000 to 28,000.

After the bloody suppression, the ROC government arrested and monitored anybody still alive thought to have been involved in the '28th February incident' and suppressed all news about the incident (Chen, 2007: 9). Chun-Xiang Jia (2000) argues, after accessing clippings from the contemporary main Taiwanese media that only fifteen items related to the incident were published in a period of forty years. Especially from 1948 to 1983, relevant information nearly disappeared in the public discourse. Jia describes this as 'social amnesia' (Jia, 2000: 148). Meanwhile, the ROC government was losing the civil war against the Communists, and finally retreated from mainland China. With the support of the US they established a regime in Taiwan in 1949. The leader of the ROC, also the leader of the Kuomintang party (KMT), Kai-Shek Chiang, made Taipei the temporary capital, and two million people, consisting mainly of soldiers or members of the ruling KMT, intellectual and business elites, were evacuated to Taiwan. Chinese Communists took control of the mainland, and ROC's jurisdiction was limited to Taiwan and its surrounding islands. However, Kai-Shek Chiang did not give up on recapturing China and tried to establish a base in Taiwan. Therefore, on 19th May 1947, the Taiwan Provincial Guard Command declared martial law, and in June it enacted the 'Regulations on the punishment of the Insurgency' and 'Regulations on the elimination of the spy'. These restrictive laws

were used to suppress political opposition and to consolidate the leadership of KMT's one-party policy, as well as re-establishing self-identity with the Chinese as the ontology. The period 1950-60 is also called the 'White Terror', when conservative estimates suggest 8,000 elites were imprisoned or executed for being perceived as anti-KMT or pro-Communist; the number of cases the military courts accepted was over 30,000 and included many injustices (Wong, 2012: 3). As a consequence of the White Terror, both Taiwanese and Chinese intellectuals, dissenters, liberals and an entire generation of social elites were persecuted over the next forty years. Those who survived prison or exile were mostly silent or self-exiled (Wu, 2005: 8).

Behind all atrocities and repression, the KMT regime was trying to establish nationalism in Taiwan as the 'Nation' called the Republic of China, through totalitarian means, to continue the struggle against the Communist Party of China. The term 'nation' was used to denote an ethnic group that recognizes its own country, as the government wanted to persuade people that it was in most people's interests to become a sovereign state with a single, national identity. (A. Smith, 2001: 22; Chirot & McCauley, 2012: 150). Eric J. Hobsbawm illustrates Ernest Gellner's ideas about nationalism, which is not the awakening of national self-consciousness but rather a nostalgia for an original nationality that did not exist, in order to create independent states with a collective cognition (Hobsbawm, 1990: 9). Therefore, the KMT tried to create a 'Chinese Community' in Taiwan. As Benedict Anderson describes, this 'nation' was an imagined community: 'through historical expositions collective memories are made as important recognized conditions to imagine nations; meanwhile histories are usually instrumental and could be manipulated in the formulation of a nation' (Anderson, 1983: 5-6). Psychologist and anthropologist Francisco Gil-White points out that no matter how the notion of 'nation' is proved to be artificial, imagined and flexible, most people still have a strong tendency to

identify with a specific ethnic nation, and believe they should be loyal and patriotic, with a sense belonging that is fundamental and unchangeable (Pinker, 2002: 323; Chirot & McCauley, 2012: 198). Anderson also indicates that nationalism often calls for its people to express self-sacrificing love of the nation through fear and hatred of the Other (in Taiwan's case, Communist China); therefore, dark stories of terror and bloodshed are considered necessary steps toward liberation or 'incidents' that might as well be forgotten (Anderson, 1983: 199; Van Der Veer, 1996: 251).

Because of this unique history, the evolution of Taiwanese modern theatre is entangled with its political background. Therefore, the progress of modern theatre, which at first was part of the ideological state apparatus controlled by the new coming regime, intended to unite local people, has aspects of cross-cultural translation, Western modernity and postcolonial context in response to different stages of modernization and democratization. Theatrical scholar Ming-De Zhong notes that Taiwanese art and literature have developed under the influence of the political environment. Japanese colonization substantially influenced the Taiwanese economy and the earliest modern theatre in Taiwan began under Japanese rule (Zhong, 1996: 159; Liao, 2012: 2). Around 1936, during the promotion of the Imperial colonization, there were many 'Imperialized troupes' performing Japanese-language plays to assimilate Taiwanese audiences and enforce Japanese militarism. The government censored traditional Taiwanese-language plays and created the stereotype of such performances as outdated (Lo, 2007: 147). Despite this, the discussion and practice of advanced political drama were also introduced by modern Westernized Japanese theatre; these earliest participants in the Taiwanese new drama movement included left-wing literati such as Shen-Qie Zhang, Wei-Xian Zhang and Guo-Xian Jian. They all trained in Japanese professional troupes, and they called their theatre a 'little theatre' to distinguish from those governmentally funded propaganda theatre. (Yu,

2003: 76). To take Guo-Xian Jian as an example, after graduating from the University of Tokyo, he wrote many scripts for broadcast in Japanese, and accused Japan's imperialist colonial rule of bullying, insulting and exploiting the Taiwanese. Jian wrote the play *Alishan* (1943) to protest against the imperialistic control and intervention in theatrical performance, intended to assimilate the Taiwanese. Jian also wrote the one-act play *Wall* (1946), which responded to the situation in Taiwan after the war and after returning to its motherland. The unequal distribution of wealth is everywhere, with officials living in luxury and those at the bottom of society in danger of starving. This was received enthusiastically by audiences, but the authorities forced Jian's troupe to dissolve, accused of 'provoking class struggle'. In 1954, he was sentenced to death under the 'Regulations on the punishment of the Insurgency'. Modern theatre for these Taiwanese local playwrights was a form of resistance; as theorist and critic Su-Shang Lu proposed in his article *On the Drama Reform in Taiwan* (1940). Lu believed the little theatre to be a '[k]ind of revolution, a movement to fight for people's performing rights' (Lu, 1961: 564). This ideal theatre doesn't need to be on large scale, but it reflects for the first time Taiwanese collective suspicion of the ideologically supreme 'Chinese Community' promoted by the KMT.

However, Lu's anticipation of the new Taiwanese drama or 'little theatre movement' suffered great setbacks after the 28th February incident and the continued martial law (Liao, 2012: 2). In 1950, the KMT's propaganda department founded the Chinese Literature and Art Prize Committee to richly reward anti-communist and anti-Russian scripts (Ma, 2007: 38; Huang, 2015: 3). The government utilized Chinese-speaking (Beijing dialect) drama as an official propagandist instrument to present 'fighting spirits' (Lu, 2006: 111), or to advertise the traditional Chinese morality of loyal, filial duty to assimilate the Taiwanese with Chinese mainlanders; performance space and opportunities of local Taiwanese dialects (Hokkien dialect)

were seriously suppressed (Cai, 2008: 54). This process is close to the Japanese assimilation movement, as Taiwanese theatre researcher Yi-Lin Chen points out. The KMT government was trying to encourage writers to define the mythical ‘Identity of the Republic of China’ and then nationalize this identity to construct an imaginary community in Taiwan (Chen, 1997; 199). The most representative of these plays might be Man-Gui Li’s *Han Gong Chun Qiu (The story of Han Dynasty)* (1956), which uses a traditional Chinese historical story to encourage patriotism and recognition of the constructed ideology of China. At the same time, anti-Communist and anti-Russian drama were prosperous; however, the dramaturgy of this period was mostly melodrama, with obviously good and evil opposition or escapist aesthetics. The stereotyped stories and restricted creativity made the theatre lack vitality, therefore had not received much attention or discussion (Chi, 2011; Huang, 2015: 2).

However, in the 1960s, Taiwan experienced further change. In 1963, the proportion of industry to gross national product (GDP) began to exceed that of agriculture in Taiwan, and the proportion of private enterprises began to exceed state-owned enterprises. The export-oriented economy was industrialized, and Taiwan was growing into one of the most progressive nations in East Asia (Xiao, 1989 : 21-23). This not only improved Taiwanese’s material living standards, but the level of public education had been greatly improved, and the middle-class were increasing. Rising living standards meant leisure and entertainment had space to progress; on the other side, people’s awareness of political issues had increased and the question of Taiwanese identity and position became more prominent and led to potential internal conflicts (Ma, 1996: 19-20; Huang, 2015: 13; Liao, 2012: 2). Another important fact is that America played a crucial role in Taiwan’s politics and economy during this period. This includes US support for the KMT in the Japanese War (1937-1945) and the civil war with Communist China (1945-1949). Even after the KMT fell back to

Taiwan, the US continued to provide financial and military assistance during the Cold War. From 1958 to 1965, the US provided Taiwan with \$100 million in the form of cash assistance to promote Taiwan's transition to free-market capitalism (Brown, 2004: 60-63; Roy, 2003: 99-102). Until 1979, when the US and the PRC established diplomatic relations and cutting off diplomatic relations with Taiwan, Taiwan had always been an important link in the 'island chain' to keep the Communists surrounded (Roy, 2003: 98-151). Therefore, although the Taiwanese still lived under autocracy, their inner spirit and belief might be closer to the psychology of immigrants to the United States, the symbol of Westernism and a free, open and liberal society.

In response, Taiwanese theatre intentionally looked to learn and imitate advanced Western theatre, and it was greatly influenced by European and US modernism and existentialism, as well as post-war trends such as existentialist drama, absurd theatre, epic theatre, cruel theatre and environment theatre. Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco were among the playwrights that expanded the horizons of the younger generation of Taiwanese theatre-makers; Sen Ma describes this phenomenon as the second Western tide in Taiwanese theatrical history. (Ma, 1996: 17; Yu, 2011: 63). Yi-Wei Yao's *Red Nose* (1968), Xiao-Feng Zhang's *Wuling People* (1972), Sen Ma's *Flowers and Swords* (1976) and many other plays use epic dramatic techniques to express social observation, or draw on symbolism or expressionism to reveal the deep meaning of the character's mind, or using the absurd form to examine the ridiculous dilemmas of life.

In the 1960s, Man-Gui Li returned from her study of European and US drama and vigorously advocated the 'little theatre movement' in Taiwan, which drew on André Antoine's idea of Théâtre Libre (Free Theatre). For Sen Ma, another explanation of 'Little theatre' came from 'The little theatre guild of Great Britain'

which was organized by different groups of amateur theatres and included avant-garde theatre, experimental theatre, fringe theatre and community theatre (Ma, 1996: 17-18). Combining the characteristics of non-mainstream, anti-commercial organization and performance, Man-Gui Li started a series of activities aimed at improving Taiwanese theatre, such as the ‘Youth drama exhibition’, which encouraged the drama clubs of various colleges and universities to perform scripts written by domestic playwrights. There was also the ‘World drama exhibition’, which allowed foreign language students from various colleges and universities to perform in foreign languages (Cai, 2008:55). Although these works are rarely preserved, these experiences were powerful and led to the later ‘Experimental theatre exhibition’. At the same time, throughout the 1970s theatrical students returned from the West and started teaching performance, introducing the newest avant-garde knowledge. The 1960s and ’70s, then, was a period in which modern Taiwanese theatre absorbed the Western theatrical experience rapidly, breaking with tradition and preparing for the flowering of creativity in the golden age of Taiwanese political theatre (Ma, 1996: 19; Zhong, 1999: 14; Huang, 2015: 2).

1-2 The first generation of political theatre in Taiwan: Experimental Theatre (1980-1986)

The Taiwanese political situation in the 1970s was accompanied by economic prosperity and the emergence of a middle class. The international political structure was massively changed and became hostile to Taiwan. In 1971, the UN switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing as the People's Republic of China (PRC) assumed China's official membership, and the ROC government left the UN Security Council in protest. Finally, in 1978 the US ended its military alliance with ROC, and established official diplomatic relations with PRC, the number of countries that recognized the ROC government diplomatically fell to around twenty, isolating Taiwan in the international community.

Simultaneously, within Taiwan, opposition to the totalitarian KMT started to rise. Although the authorities had brutally repressed them, the liberalists and idealists stubbornly resist the government by questioning the legitimacy of authoritarian power (Huang, 2015: 4). In 1979, the pro-democracy protest known as the Formosa Incident (Kaohsiung Incident) took place in Kaohsiung (Ma, 1996: 19); 'Formosa' is said to be a praise issued by the Portuguese sailors in the 14th century when they sailed through Taiwan, it means the beautiful island, and is therefore regarded by the Taiwanese as a symbol of local identity. This incident began as a procession to celebrate Human Rights Day, and the leading figures were mostly the editors of Formosa magazine. They asked for the lifting of the ban on newspaper publications and political parties, and an end to martial law. The authorities utilized tear gas and troops to crush the protest and arrest those leaders. They were tortured by the Taiwan garrison command with beatings and sleep deprivation, and the military court sentenced most of them to death. However, through the intervention of the US and international human rights organizations, as well as pressure from international media and domestic public

opinions, this was later changed, sentencing the main leader Ming-De Shi to life imprisonment and five other leaders to ten years. Another 33 participants and intellectuals served varying sentences. The significance of the Formosa Incident is that it reveals that the pursuit of democracy in Taiwan was not only the desire of elites, but also had public support (Wu, 2000: 90-91).



▲ The military court for the Formosa Incident (1979); Ming-De Shi is in the middle wearing a black suit.

Jeng-Hwan Wang (1989) argues that there were two political transformations of the KMT government in 1972 and 1986, each in reaction to a crisis of legitimacy and attempting to deepen their legitimacy of its regime. Wang called the transformation in 1972 '*Translate from outside to inside*' and in 1986 '*Justify from top to bottom.*' The KMT at first actively sought greater social support from the political and economical elites to maintain its rule, by strengthening the Chinese recognition and Sino-centric ideology. However, because of the loss of external support from the international community (especially the US), there was a clear difference of opinion between the state and society after the Formosa Incident. Wang indicates that the KMT government was unable to recognize the new rising social forces and change in public

opinion, and chose to repress and counterattack. To protect its legitimacy, president Ching-Kuo Chiang (son of Kai-Shek Chiang) began to take more liberal political policy in subsequent years, such as offering to implement the '*Three Principles of the People to unify China*' in 1981 (Chen, 2011: 13-14). He also lifted the ban on political parties and newspapers, abolished the obstruction of mainlanders to visit China and relatives, and finally abandoned martial law in 1987. Thus, political criticism was no longer restricted.

Against this background, Yi-Wei Yao had succeeded Man-Gui Li as chair of the Chinese drama appreciation committee, an official committee consisting of the most famous Taiwanese playwrights and critics, formed to organize regular drama exhibitions. In response to most Taiwanese dramatic activities being limited to university campuses, Yao promoted the 'Experimental drama exhibition', taking social groups as the main participants and without the pressure of a box office. From 1980-1984, there were five exhibitions, performing a total of 36 plays. The performances included foreign scripts, adapted novels or traditional operas, many based on real-life and reflecting issues in daily Taiwanese society. The Experimental drama exhibition encouraged theatrical creativity and discovered many excellent scriptwriters, directors and performers, such as Shi-Jie Jin, Sheng-Chuan Lai, Guo-Xiu Li, Jing-Min Liu, and Ming-Liang Cai. It proposed a new direction for the subjectivity of Taiwanese theatre at that time, by drawing on both Western and Chinese traditions, to express individual and collective creativity without constraint (Ma, 1996: 19; Liao, 2012: 2). Finally, the concept of stage performance began to reach the general public, and the educated youth started to participate in theatre movements (Cai, 2008: 56; Zhong, 1999: 14). 'Over 94.5% of audiences were [aged] less than thirty' and 'Most of the theatrical workers were young college students.' (Zhong, 1996: 43-47). This became the most important enlightenment experience for

younger generations to participate in and appreciate theatrical art (Zhong, 1999: 83; Chen, 2007: 24).

The first experimental drama exhibition included Lan-ling Theatre's *He Zhu's New Match* (1980), directed and written by Shi-Jie Jin. *He Zhu's New Match* was adapted from a traditional play from the Peking Opera into a story about the lower-class character He Zhu, who lies and fakes her identity for money. The other five main characters in this play are also self-interested, greedy and exploit each other. The play ironically mimicked the ugly social phenomena of prosperous Taiwanese society and mocked the relationship between Taiwan and the US (Jin, 2013: 54). Jin's play absorbed the ideas of Chinese traditional opera and Western theatrical practice, and developed a new style between realism and stylized performance. The humour and irony of this play presented the true voice of the modern Taiwanese and aroused enthusiastic responses from audiences and the arts sector. Jin said:

Many professionals in the industry think that this has not appeared in Taiwan for a long time. Plus, the media at the time was very helpful. Many newspapers and magazines use us as the cover. Everyone feels that they are suddenly became a star overnight. (Cited from Liu, 2018)

The play was performed 33 times in the following three years and even toured China (Cai, 2008: 57). The success of Lan-ling Theatre incited the grand wave of the little theatre movement. According to the statistics, after the fifth experimental drama exhibition, many self-funding theatrical organizations started to appear, and at the highest point, there were more than fifteen active theatrical organizations in Taipei alone (Ma, 1996: 19-20; Liao, 2012: 19). Although Lan-ling Theatre closed in 1990, based on the pressures of the box office, it cultivated many writers (such as Sheng-Chuan Lai and Yu-Hui Chen) and performers (such as Guo-Xiu Li, Li-Qun Li), as

well as promoting groups such as Performance Workshop, Ping-Fong Acting Troupe, U-Theatre and Paper-windmill Theatre.



▲ The poster marks the 30-year anniversary of the premiere of *He Zhu's New Match*.

Sheng-Chuan Lai and many actors from Lan-ling Theatre founded Performance Workshop and produced the comedy *The Evening, We performed Crosstalk* (1985). As *He Zhu's New Match* adapted from Peking Opera, Lai adapted Chinese crosstalk (Hsiang-Sheng), which is a traditional Chinese form of comedy, setting it in a modern Western restaurant. This implied the awkward situation of Chinese traditions in modern Taiwan. Guo-Xiu Li and Li-Qun Li played talk show hosts, and introduced two legendary crosstalk masters from China, who did not appear; in desperation, the two hosts had to disguise as those invited guests to go on the stage. However, during the performance, they seem to have really changed from two modern Taiwanese comedians to traditional Chinese crosstalk performers. The story is told in reverse chronological order to transfer the scene from the modern Western restaurant in Taipei, to China during the war, and Beijing city in the late Qing Dynasty. In addition

to ridiculing the relationship between Taiwan and China, it reminded people in Taipei that things stay the same, but people change. Using comedy to present such nostalgia caused a public craze: the show was well received and performed many times, as well as the tape of the performance selling widely across Taiwan. (Wang, 2000: 2) The success of this show saved the Chinese traditional art of crosstalk in Taiwan, which had been in decline. Lai went on to create *Look Who's Crosstalking This Evening* (1989), *Strange Tales from Taiwan* (1991), *The Complete History of Chinese Thought* (1997), *Millennium Teahouse* (2000), *Total Woman* (2005) and *Crosstalk Travellers* (2011). Lai used comedians to criticize political issues inside Taiwanese society, through an outdated traditional Chinese art style to capture the predicament of Taiwanese identity. *Look Who's Crosstalking This Evening* tells a story about Taiwanese returning home to visit relatives and facing the 'leave or stay' dilemma, as well as discussing the Cultural Revolution. *Millennium Teahouse* satirises the chaos after the rotation of political parties by democratic elections and raises doubts about the emerging ideology with Taiwanese as the new identity, replacing Chinese identity. The comic dialogue of these Crosstalk series became part of the brand of the Performance Workshop. Hong Kong dramatist Ke-Huan Lin describes that, just as Taiwan entered consumer society, Lai foresaw the inevitability of the transformation of avant-garde drama and took the initiative with experimental drama in popular culture. In most of his subsequent works, they have a postmodern flavour that has Lai's own unique artistic personality and concern for the interests of the public (Lin, 2007: 91). This deeply influenced the Taiwanese dramaturgy of later generations.

Before returning to Taiwan, Lai trained with the Dutch director Shireen Strooker of the Amsterdam Werkteater. Therefore, his dramaturgy relies on collective improvisation with actors in rehearsal; during the process, he stimulates and encourages his actors with interaction and improvised activities. Finally, as the

director, he selects, edits and trims to complete the performance text. Besides the series of crosstalk, Lai uses this dramaturgy to create *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land* (1986). The story of *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land* tells of two troupes accidentally sharing the same stage for rehearsal. There were two different storylines, *The Peach Blossom Land* is a comedy set in the past and *Secret Love* is a modern melodrama. The plots become interspersed with two troupes' rehearsing, and while this is comedic, it also achieves an effect of alienation. *The Peach Blossom Land* is adapted from fourth-century Chinese literature, specifically a story about a fisherman mistakenly intruding upon a utopian land called peach blossom land. He becomes homesick and returns home to see his wife, only to find that in his absence she has married another man, and the fisherman is then unable to return to peach blossom land. Again, Lai metaphorically described the emotions and feelings of those that retreated with ROC government to Taiwan: even in 1986 they still had no way to contact relatives in China, continuing to (metaphorically) yearn for the peach blossom land (Wang, 2000: 12). *Secret Love* is more direct, telling the story of a man who retreats from China and marries a Taiwanese woman, but cannot forget a lover from his youth in China. The protagonist is dying and asks his wife to send his ashes back to his hometown; this "body in Taiwan but heart in China" reflected the helpless and confused nostalgia of the whole generation of soldiers and mainlanders in 1949. Finally, the protagonist's young lover visits him, and tells him she has been living in Taipei, but had no way to find him. As Lai wrote in the preface to *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land*:

Part of the *Secret Love*'s matters was put inside me for a long time. My eldest uncle was close to me, and the doctor claimed he got cancer in 1983, and only three months to live. (But he lived until 2003) My second and third uncles both lived in China, and there was a rare opportunity in 1984 [in] which the third

uncle [was] able to meet my eldest uncle in 1984. During the whole process of their meeting, they were both thinking if this meeting will be the last time for so long? It's very melodrama[tic] but also true. (Lai, 1999: 206. [As like all other quotes original in Chinese, translated by myself])

Secret Love indicated how lives had been sacrificed and wasted. However, Lai is also fully aware that some of this was fabricated by an older political ideology. He used the character Director to tell the actors that what they are performing is not what actually happened. The Director says, 'Bin-Liu Jiang, I tell you, you are not doing well in this scene. When you are old, lying on the hospital bed in the next scene, you will have no memories! Do you understand?' But they don't understand. The young actors suspect that this is the story of the director himself. By rehearsing a play that presents those from each side of the strait, Lai is the first playwright in Taiwan using theatre to break the taboo and discuss the sensitive relationship between Taiwan-China, and mourn the misfortunes shared by the two sides.

The Ping-Fong Acting Troupe should also be considered part of Taiwanese early political theatre. The head of the troupe, Guo-Xiu Li, played the main character Zhao-Wang in *He Zhu's New Match*, and became one of the original founders of Performance Workshop; he participated in creating *The Evening, We performed Crosstalk* and performed with Li-Qun Li. However, because of creative differences with Sheng-Chuan Lai, Li set up his own Ping-Fong Acting Troupe in 1986. After a year, Li presented a comical play *Do Three People Work or Not* (1987), which was a great success and was performed 32 times in the same year around Taiwan. *Do Three People Work or Not* arranged fragments of modern Taipei lives; each actor had to perform several characters at the same time, as a parody of urban high-effectiveness and cold interpersonal relationships. In a fragment set in a modern office, every actor has a circle on their heads as a metaphor, when they put that on along with lighting

changes; everyone starts to say what they really mean. Compared with their earlier obedience this makes the audience smile. In another section, the same actor plays a rookie policeman trying to explain an accident and the senior policeman receiving the explanation; he also plays the deceased, the drunk and himself, constantly changing positions and running hard, which is again very funny to the audience. Similar dramatization was used by Li in *Republic of China 76 years Memorandum* (1987) and *Republic of China 78 years Memorandum* (1989). Here, Li interspersed the news of the year with his criticisms, attempting to engage the audience to reflect.

Another technique used by Li is a 'story within a story', as in *Half mile Great Wall* (1989) or *Apocalypse of Peking Opera* (1996), which present the chaotic and also comic process of a fictional Fong-Ping Theatre rehearsing and performing (Huang, 2015: 7). *Apocalypse of Peking Opera* is about the '90s Fong-Ping theatre attempting to perform the story of a Peking Opera band in the 1940s, the Liang-family troupe. The troupe suffered during the Chinese civil war; and for the troupe's survival, the leader wonders whether to keep the traditional style or change to something more modern. The play contains the traditional Peking Opera *A Fisherman's Struggle*, and the Chinese play about the Cultural Revolution *The Taking of Tiger Mountain*. The motif of this play is related to Li's personal experience and background. His father was a Peking Opera's shoemaker, who was poor because, as an exotic art from North China with different dialect structure, traditional Peking Opera is declining in Taiwanese society. However, his father taught Li an important lesson: *if a man can do one thing well in his life, his duty is complete*. Therefore, when the traditional troupe in the play contemplate giving up the traditions to adopt the propaganda drama of the Communist Party or stick to tradition and perish, Li's character repeats this line to those members in the troupe, reflecting how the political

environment has changed and influenced performers' fortunes. Li sees this play as a tribute to those who stick to their beliefs and do their duty (Chen, 2006: 40-42).

The Performance Workshop and Ping-Fong Acting Troupe succeeded in the success of Lan-ling Theatre and created new theatre audiences and amateurs. This period in the early '80s could be regarded as the transition before the upcoming significant break. With the changes in the political environment and social atmosphere, awakening Taiwanese subjectivity could no longer be hidden; the ROC government-led Chinese identity used by those performances was different from the upcoming progressively shaped Taiwanese identity in more and more little scale performances (Yang, 1999: 23; Huang, 1993: 4-7; Zhong, 1994: 109). Sen Ma indicates that in the mid-80s there was a split:

Besides a part of the political theatre in this period only considered how to become mainstream, professional theatre. There are some others of "Little Theatre" based on their ideology and personal ideal, which willing to stay at the amateur position of alternative theatre. It presents the tendency of artists to oppose the official system in politics. (Ma, 1999: 29)

Mo-Lin Wang remembers these new 'Little Theatres' becoming a movement that started in 1986; similarly, Ming-De Zhong specifically noted that 1986 was the end of experimental theatre and the beginning of avant-garde theatre, which differed in terms of aesthetic and political recognition of the Greater China ideology (Wang, 1990: 155; 1999: 59-60; Zhong, 1999: 20). Accompanied by the liberation from martial law in 1987, avant-garde theatre combined with the social movement, political liberation and other issues, becoming sharp and full of critical spirit (Cai, 2008: 56).

1-3 The second generation of political theatre in Taiwan: Postmodern Theatre (1986-1990)

In 1987, president Ching-Kuo Chiang lifted martial law of Taiwan, the ban on newspaper publications and the ban on political parties. In 1988, congress passed *The Law Governing People's Rallies and Protests* to indemnify Taiwanese freedom to rally, protest or express political opinions openly (Li, 2010: 169). At this time, Taiwan was only one step away from complete democratization; as Jeng-Hwan Wang argues, the KMT government adapted its national recognition after 1986 onwards, from comprehensive 'Chinesenization' to a 'Justify from top to bottom' path, attempting to reinforce its legitimacy with 'Taiwanized' or 'Localized' governmental members to get more support from local Taiwanese. For example, in 1984, Ching-Kuo Chiang selected a Taiwanese-born, US-educated technocrat, Teng-Hui Lee, to be his vice-president; and Lee succeeded Chiang as president after his death in 1988 (Wang, 1989). The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was formed as the first alternative to the KMT in 1986, mainly organized by Taiwanese intellectuals, mostly were west-educated and opposed to authoritarianism. It included lawyers who had defended the Formosa Incident defendants. In the election at the end of the year for supplementary seats in the Taiwanese Congress, all 12 DPP candidates were elected, suggesting that further democratic transition was unstoppable (Winckler, 1992; Chen, 2011a: 601).

One of the reasons for this can be observed in terms of livelihood: in 1978-1988, the average annual economic growth rate reached 8%. McDonald's, convenience stores, movie theatres and karaoke were introduced to Taiwan as general income rose and the middle-class emerged. Educational standards also increased with the freedom of publishing or exchanging political information, and feminism, environmental rights and labour rights flourished. Fang-Shuo Nan described this period as the age in which 'Taiwan broke the old shackles of the times, because so many new things and social

contents began to be added to the old structure and culture at the moment'. Although it was also like a grand carnival composed of stock markets, lotto, drug-using, car-racing and other indulgences, Nan states 'Everyone felt that they had lived in a promising age'(Nan, 1998). Ze Yang saw a new era of political transition in Taiwan: the liberation of a variety of classes, genders and ethnic groups was coming. There was a 'burning image of the public mass and rebellious action' (Yang, 1999: 7) that laid the foundation for the emergence of the new political theatre after 1986 (Huang, 2015: 9-10; Liao, 2012: 2).

During this time, as Gayatri C. Spivak (1990) states the dilemma of all political artistic creation: 'If you want the reform to be effective, you must incorporate yourself into the system, but if you go into the system, your innovation will be co-opted (governmental incorporation).' (as cited by Zhong, 1996b: 60) Therefore, many subsequent productions of the first generation of the experimental theatre deliberately catered to the public taste, became more entertaining and neglecting serious political issues, which gradually grew into commercial theatre (Ma, 1996: 21; Zhong, 1989: 217-231). But along with changes in the political environment in the late 80s, Taiwanese political theatre was filled with a new and discontented atmosphere of change. Many new small theatres appeared, such as the Rive-Gauche Theatre Group (1985), Luo-River Exhibition Group (1985), Huan-Xu Theatre Group (1985), Notes Theatre (1985), U-theatre (1988), Critical Point Theatre Phenomenon (1988) and so forth, mostly composed of students interested in both drama and politics. As Ming-De Zhong argues (1999), these theatre groups compressed together Western modern art and the concept of the avant-garde movement, and were consciously and deliberately anti-system, anti-traditional, anti-mainstream and even anti-co-opted. For instance, Bertolt Brecht's dramatic theory of 'Epic Theatre' intended to subvert traditional theatrical aesthetics such as abandoning the framing stage and 'the fourth wall'

between performers and audiences, and to develop the audience's ability to observe, see through and criticize as the 'art of spectating (Zuschaukunst)'. This was based on his own experience of witnessing the rise of Hitler's Nazi Germany. Brecht argues that the audience must be trained in the theatre to see through the performances of politicians and to prevent them being used or misled. These concepts correspondingly changed the Taiwanese theatrical artists' understanding of the social function of theatre. It actively converged with movements in and ideas about environmental protection, student movements, anti-nuclear power, rescue-forest, political protests and even became directly involved in elections (Wang, 1990; Huang, 2015: 8; Zhong, 1996a: 106-107; Zhong, 1999: 204; Liao, 2012: 19).

Social action theatre engaged audiences with the political condition of the dramatic space and formed a direct dialogue with social reality. It turned every corner of society into theatrical space, so that theatre intervened in daily life. Mo-Lin Wang states this kind of performance gathered public attention through the energy of the performers and a realistic environment, and a combination of political pioneering ideas with popularization (Wang, 1990: 339-345; Zhong, 1994: 107). One important work was performed outside theatres, taking to the street, symbolically against the authoritarian system. Jie-Ren Chen organized a group of blindfolded actors walking round in Taipei's bustling streets in 1983, as a metaphor of cultural repression, political chaos and other things blinding Taiwanese society (Quintero, 2006: 106). Also, in 1985, Luo-River Exhibition Group performed *Interchange* in one of Taipei's underpasses. Actors walked in slow motion and attracted passers-by with impromptu interaction. However, they were arrested for 'obstructing the traffic' (Zhong, 2001: 174). In 1987, the Rive-Gauche Theatre Group presented *The Monologue of Watching Sea in the Ruins October* directed by Huan-Xiong Li. The characters include a dictator, the dictator's prostitute mother, a young Chinese Communist soldier who

survived the Cultural Revolution, a Taiwanese junior high school girl who just had her first menstruation and an angel without wings, together in an abandoned shipyard as a metaphor for the complicated structure and situation of people living in Taiwan at that time when the whole society was just about to ‘democratize and modernize’. The director constructed a carnival space that he imagined without any restrictions of martial law (Wang, 1990: 83-92). In 1988, Mo-Lin Wang designed an anti-nuclear action drama *Expel the evil spirits of Lantau*. Wang associated with local aborigines on Lantau island to protest against nuclear waste stored in their ancestral land. Wang described how they made the demonstration dramatic with ritual dances against evil spirits in the local flying fish festival. Wang states: ‘The society is our stage. The public is our actor. The social event is our script.’ *Expel the evil spirits of Lantau* was known as Taiwan’s first political piece of theatre that directly combined theatre and social movement (Wang, 1990: 108; Yu, 2011: 63). Finally, Rive-Gauche Theatre Group, Huan-Xu Theatre Group and Critical Point Theatre Phenomenon participated in the rescue-forest movement and performed on the street in 1989 (Ma, 1996: 21; Diamond, 1995: 119-120).



▲ Jie-Ren Chen, *Loss of function no. 3* (1983)

Another distinguishing characteristic of this period of political theatre is found in Ming-De Zhong's analysis of the texts of relevant productions, such as the Huan-Xu Theatre Group's *Went to the sunset and appeared the wolf* (1987), and the Rive-Gauche Theatre Group's *Intruder* (1986), *The sun still shining* (1987) and *No coordinate Island* (1988). He argues that the dramaturgy of these plays abandons the traditional realistic structure and questions the credibility and representativeness of the plots and characters on stage, using the anti-narrative structure to further create schizophrenic characters who stand on the verge of mental breakdown. They also deconstructed the ideological, socially-dominated system by revealing the political anxiety of liberating the repressed individual ideology to the outside world. Further, it is obvious that they were influenced by the style and dramaturgy of part of the Theatre of the Absurd masterpieces in Europe after World War II introduced during the time: Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* (1950) or Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952). These works focused on

the idea of existentialism and expressed what happens when human existence has no meaning or purpose, which aroused the resonance of Taiwanese audience at that time about the metaphorical political condition (Hu, 2007: 101; Zhong, 1994: 106-107, 1989: 19-36; Lu, 2003: 28).

Went to the sunset and appeared the wolf was divided into two parts: the first part was a rehearsal process and the second part an adaptation of Strindberg's *Creditors* (1888), a play about a Western middle-class loving relationship. The actors asked why they had to perform this in Taipei; would the audience come to watch it; and what does it mean? This confusion was actually a microcosm of contemporary Taipei culture, and they performed it as part of the self-reflexivity of artists to deconstruct the reproduction of existing art forms. The actors finally abandoned Strindberg's text and broke the realistic narrative rules. It became three actors' monologues about personal nightmares and the subconscious, such as 'The fear of going home alone late at night' and 'a strange man lived in the garbage mountain'. These were the collective nightmares of those living in Taipei. They used different kinds of language and movement, gestures, images and voices, finishing with helpless screaming and sirens from all directions.

If we compare this to *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land*, we can see again the conflicts and relationships between actors during rehearsal; however, in *Secret* the actors are trying hard to reclaim the space for the rehearsal, and in the end, no matter how difficult or awkward, they finished the performance; but in *Went*, those actors negate the meaning of the performance from the beginning. They start mimicking Western modern theatrical language, and encounter significant frustrations and doubts; finally, the show was not important anymore, and turned into a series of screams about modern Taipei people's anxiety and nightmares. Another example is the *Intruder* which was also adapted from a stalwart of European modernism, Maurice

Maeterlinck's *Intruse* (1890); however, the performance broke the original plot. Director Huan-Xiong Li used the film technique of montage to splice images of actors' bodies and gestures together, finishing with the statement that 'Taiwanese history is a series of intruders' (Zhong, 1994: 125).

Ming-De Zhong describes this transformation as the process of Taiwanese little theatre changed from modern to postmodern. Ming-De Zhong quotes Hal Foster's theory of 'Resistant Postmodernism' to further analyse the main subjectivity of little theatre in this period. Foster argues that postmodern arts resist both mainstream modernistic colonization and the reactionary mentality behind normalizing everything instead of making changes. Therefore, postmodern artists do not simply imitate the popular, fictional historical form as cultural codes to adapt into their creations, but critically deconstruct the traditions or origins behind the status quo and so reveal countless connections between current culture and social politics to pursue change (Foster, 1983: xii; cited by Zhong, 1996a: 130). This feature of resistance has appeared extensively in those works during the period mentioned, perhaps caused by the complicated ideological confrontations during this time, in the young capitalist modern country. Taiwan resisted both Western cultural hegemony and democratization, and internally deconstructed the capitalistic monopoly and the KMT's narrative of Chinese Nationalism (Zhong, 1994: 120-121, 130). Therefore, many plays had radical or even rebellious motifs for the first time. For example, *No coordinate Island* clearly reflected the creator's questioning of Taiwan's own political position and identity. In 1989, Anti-UO Theatre Group, a group of National Taiwan University students, performed *Blood Sacrifice for Wen-Jia Luo* in front of the statue of Kai-shek Chiang, to challenge the punishment of the student union president (Chen, 2004: 57). Also, in 1989, People's Theatre Group presented *Song of the Covered Wagon*, which told the story of a victim of the 28th February incident,

secondary school principal Hao-Dong Zhong. Based on real historical data, the play describes the sacrifices he made to advocate democracy and the abuse he suffered in prison. This was also the first political play in Taiwan to tell the story of left-wing intellectuals in the 1950s. Taiwanese political theatre reflected a society that was beginning to confront the authoritarian power structure, language system, legal system and every mainstream value decided by the KMT government. In an era where democracy has not yet been truly implemented, political theatre was in direct confrontation with the national machinery: both artistic performance and a fierce political movement. (Wang, 1990: 347-357; Chi, 2002:45; Liao, 2012: 18; Guo, 2014: 171)

However, the consequence of the postmodern transformation of Taiwanese political theatre gradually created a phenomenon in which characters started to disappear in favour of collage storylines, as this wave of political and social ideas met theatrical aesthetics. This is similar to Robert W. Corrigan's thoughts on Robert Wilson's postmodern performances, in which visual or auditory effects became the fundamental elements of the theatre and language and texts were dispensable. There might be no motif, subject, story or narrative structure, but only mumbling or muttering (Corrigan, 1984: 160-161). This made the actor like a signifier of the ideology of the theatre, and the audience forced to navigate multiple channels of word, vision and music, and find the meaning for themselves. More and more theatres used open representation instead of a traditional plot that gave a sense of closure plot, and began to delve into different types of form focused on interactive performance, collective creating or improvisation (Lu, 2003:1). In other words, as an extension of resistance to authoritarianism, the authority of playwriting itself was challenged. Terms such as 'Anti-play', 'Anti-dramatic text', and 'Rejected the text' became a new mainstream of political theatre and the 'Director Theatre' replaced the 'Playwright

Theatre' (Yan, 2008: 53; Wang, 2001: 43). Hui-Ling Zhou explains this critical passion of the resistance and subversion to the authority, was coming from the collective dissatisfaction to the restrained martial-law and authoritarian ruling in the past. These forms of theatre emerged in response to a social need; however, this also signaled the end of prosperous political theatre in Taiwan in the years after the end of martial law and the completion of the first step of democratization. (Zhou, 2002: 21; Lu, 2003: 2).

1-4 The completion of democratization and the death of Little Theatre

After the death of Ching-Kuo Chiang in 1988, Teng-Hui Lee succeeded him as president. Lee continued to democratize the government and decrease the KMT government authority. In 1990, Lee accepted propositions from the representatives of the Wild Lily student movement; dismissed the National Assembly (formed by 565 Chinese members); abolished the restricted ‘Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of National Mobilization for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion’; and started the process of constitution amendment. This peaceful and successful student movement had become an iconic model for later democratic processes in Taiwan and many of the participants later became important politicians in Taiwan. In the same year, Lee signed the *Amnesty Order of the Formosa Incident*, granting all the political prisoners regained their freedom. Under Lee’s rule, Taiwan underwent a process of localization in which Taiwanese local culture, language, literature and history were promoted as equal, in contrast to the earlier Chinese-only identity. As democratic reforms continued, the first re-election of the Legislative Yuan (Taiwanese Parliament) was held in 1992; and the first direct presidential election in 1996, in which Teng-Hui Lee won re-election with 54% of the vote. The contribution of Lee to democratization gave him the nicknames ‘Mr. Democracy’ and the ‘Father of Taiwanese Democracy’ in both Taiwan and the international media (Reuters Taipei bureau, 2011; Yang, 2016: 340).



▲ Wild Lily student movement in front of Kai-Shek Chiang's Memorial Hall (1990)

Lee also began to investigate political incidents and lawsuits in Taiwan's history. Firstly, he ordered the Executive Yuan (Taiwanese Cabinet) to set up a project-study team to research the truth, and published the official *Report on the 28th February Incident* in 1992. According to this report, the government of ROC firstly admitted president Kai-Shek Chiang as the supreme leader of the authoritarian system, who was responsible for 'Oversight on General Yi Chen's action' and 'Fail to accept the public opinion and punished those responsible officials' (Executive Yuan Project Study Team, 1994: 410-412; Cited from Wu, 2005: 10). Then, from 1989-2002, twenty monuments to 28th February were completed in Taiwan; and Lee established the '28th February incident Memorial Foundation' (1995) and the 'Temporary Provisions Effective during the period of Communist Rebellion Compensation Foundation' (1998) to compensate victims of political oppression cases. So far, the number of compensation cases for the 28th February incident is 2,152 and for the White Terror 6,022. On 28th February 1995, at the opening ceremony of the 28th February monument at Taipei New Park, Lee apologized on behalf of the KMT government to the victims' families. The history of 28th February Incident was taught at school, and 28th February became a national holiday (Wu, 2005:10-11; Ruan, 1992:

302-303; as cited in Chen, 2008a: 208). During his tenure, Lee constantly asked forgiveness for the trauma of 28th February Incident, using slogans such as ‘Using love and tolerance to walk through the sorrow’ or ‘Hate only created more pain’ and attempting to create consensus (Wu, 2008: 48; China Times, February 24th 1992).

However, the candidate recommended by the KMT and Lee did not win in the next presidential election in 2000. As Nei-The Wu (1987) notes, there is a particular exchange relationship inside the KMT regime, which Wu calls ‘clientelism.’ Since the KMT was an external regime, reliant on local elites for cementing its legitimacy, a Chinese (KMT) patron has to offer material benefits (i.e. money, employment, business contracts, privileged loans, franchised industry or other incentives) and non-material benefits (i.e. protection, social prestige), to which Taiwanese clients respond with political support (i.e. voting, identifying as Chinese) for sustaining the legitimacy of the rule of the Republic of China on this island. Therefore, Wu argues that the adverse consequences of clientelism had a significant influence on Taiwanese democratization as bribery and corruption were part of political culture; in Lee’s 12 years of presidency, the KMT government was referred to as ‘Black-Gold’ politics, which contributed to them being voted out (Wu, 1987; Huang, 2006: 10; Chen, 2008a: 210-212). Shui-Bian Chen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was elected as the first non-KMT President and was re-elected in 2004. This put an end to the KMT’s 55 years of continuous rule and the peaceful transition established the legitimacy of new democratic institutions. However, the new regime was also mired in a series of governance crises: inconclusive and disputed electoral outcomes, endless partisan gridlock and bickering, recurring clashes over national identity, rampant corruption at the highest levels, and massive capital outflow, slow growth and a foggy economic outlook. During Chen’s tenure (2000-2008), polarized politics has emerged in Taiwan with the formation of the Pan-Blue camp of parties led by the KMT, which

controls the majority of seats in the Legislative Yuan; and the Pan-Green camp of parties led by the ministerial DPP and its allies. This separation of Taiwanese identity was profound, and leads democratic politics to become stagnated in acrimonious, endless and paralyzing infighting (Chen, 2011a: 603).

In the first tenure of President Shui-Bian Chen, Taiwanese economic growth dropped to 3.6% from Lee's (1988-99) 6.8% and Chiang's (1952-87) 9.1%. Unemployment jumped up from the average 1.88% in Ching-Kuo Chiang's time to 4.38%. It is estimated that more than 100 million people moved to China to work and live there (Economic Times, 25th May 2006). Because of the economic depression, some Taiwanese began to wonder whether democracy would actually bring happiness; according to Asia Barometer data, in 2001, only 45% of the Taiwanese electorate believed that 'democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government'; which was a sharp drop from 63% in the survey of 1999. In Academia Sinica's national telephone survey in 2003, over 46% of interviewees agreed that 'Ching-Kuo Chiang's political era before martial law ended was even better for Taiwan' (Wu, 2006: 21; Wu, 2012: 74; Chen, 2011a: 600). So, here is a disturbing fact that after Taiwanese society ushered in democratization, they expected to embrace a country of free speech and peace. For the first time, people in Taiwan faced the obligations and risks of democracy, which they must bear at the same time as they master democracy. C. B. Macpherson states that the etymology of 'democracy' is from the Greek words *demos* and *krato*, which loosely translates as the power of the people. However, Carl Schmitt claims that there is a rebellion between liberalism and democratic politics: liberalism assumes universality and refers to 'humanity', taking individual freedom, fundamental rights, and multiculturalism as its basis; whereas democratic politics places the equality and sovereignty of people as its core value and draws a boundary between 'us' and 'other' to construct the concept of 'people' of our

own within the boundary, and the enemy outside the boundary which must be expelled (Macpherson, 1977; Schmitt 1923; Mouffe, 2005: 52). Democratic liberalism entails a continuous process of negotiation between different hegemonic configurations in the above-mentioned structural tension. Only through pragmatic consultation between political forces can temporary stability be achieved. However, the situation after 1996 in Taiwan was full of disagreement, opposition, and extreme ideologies. The consensus seems to be hard to produce. This can be seen in the different accounts of the 28th February incident. For the Green Camp, the massacre was an important lesson that foreign rulers are bound to bring disaster and cruelty. However, for the Blue Camp, the incident was an unfortunate extension of the Chinese civil war, and under the framework of the Republic of China, Taiwan should seek reconciliation and forgiveness.

Yi-Xiong Lin, one of the initiators of Formosa Incident (1997) criticizes Teng-Hui Lee's governments and its attempts to cover up the 'perpetrator unknown' with compensation. Lin states the cause of the resistance was the corrupt autarchic government that ruled its people by violence; and he charges that the government dared not to implement accountability because it would have revealed its own brutal cruelty of itself. The founder of the 'Righteous and Peaceful Movement' Yong-Xing Chen denounces all those commemorative activities led by the KMT government as formalized, festivalized and materialized methods to mislead society (Chen, 2008a: 212) However, Chang-Jian Huang and Hong-Yuan Zhu published reports of the 28th February Incident in 2004 and 2005 arguing against the persecution theory. They argue the military repression was justified because of the threat represented by the protesting forces in favour of Taiwanese independence, and the number killed was 673 and missing 174, suggesting that the numbers found in another research are exaggerated (Chen, 2007: 24). Yi-Zhong Chen advocates the interpretation of 28th

February incident as a massacre between ‘Foreigners to Natives’ or ‘Chinese to Taiwanese’, suggested it should be seen in the context of Japanese colonial war, the Great East Asia War, World War II and the Chinese civil war. He argues that exploitation by Japanese, the corrupt government and the war with Chinese Communists were the causes of the unfortunate incident, not internal differences (Chen, 2007b; Wu, 2008:14). During Shui-Bian Chen’s second term as president; the Academia Historica (National History Museum) published the *Political Responsibility Attribution Report of 28th February Incident* in 2006. It concluded that as ‘Kai-Shek Chiang was the primary culprit, [he] should take the maximum responsibility.’ The spokesperson of the KMT responded: ‘To recover true history [we] cannot admix any political consideration, otherwise the research report was just a tool for political purpose’ (Zhang, 2006: 161-169; Wu, 2008: 6-7). The KMT published their version of events in a documentary film *Looking for the silent mother of February 28th— Lin, Jiang-Mai* (2006), which interviewed the victim’s daughter Ming-Zhu Lin, who indicated that the main reason for the incident was the language barrier. However, this was strongly protested by another victim’s family (Ruan, Mei-Shu) (Chen, 2008a: 217). It seems that the process of democratization did not allow a rational discussion, but rather intensely opposing emotions and a crisis of social division. Even now, there is no Taiwanese consensus on ‘Who contributed to today’s democracy?’ or ‘Who should take responsibility for political repression?’ (Chen, 2006: 39; Wu, 2005: 7).

There is similar confusion in politics and many people choose to believe what they are willing to believe. This is reflected in art. Yomi Braester indicates that since the mid-1980s, literature emerged that dealt with memories of oppression, but had a tendency to be mysterious and unclear, suggesting that ‘all the puzzles in the stories often cannot have any answer at the end’ (Braester, 2000: 233). Braester describes the post-Chiang (Kai-Shek and Ching-Kuo) era, noting that Taiwanese writers were eager

to rebuild those forgotten memories; however, they could not build a collective answer from individual testimonies, because the multiple versions of Taiwanese collective history were based on multi-narratives and multi-silences. An individual memory could not serve the collective condition. Therefore, in the process of seeking 'true' memories, they found there was no such objective answer (Chiu, 2013: 95-96). Ernest Renan noted in 'What is a Nation (1882)' that, 'The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things' (cited by Kaiser, 2005: 6). Renan proposed that this concept 'must have been forgotten' because nationalism stems from a drastic change in individual consciousness in the process of entering modernity, and the changes within the national consciousness will bring with it its own unique amnesia, according to the nature of the nation. In this case, Taiwanese individuals each follow their group context to remember or create their own past. The collective memory never existed but has become a schizophrenic social construction.

The first generation of the Little Theatre Movement (Experimental Theatre) encouraged Taiwanese audiences to go to the theatre, while the second generation (Avant-Garde Theatre) prioritised social participation. But after the fever of social movement theatre in the 80s reached the top, there were several reasons for the retreat of political theatre in Taiwan in the 90s.

Firstly, after the transition to democracy, which rapidly transformed the economy from martial law to market law (Chang, 2004), economic liberalization and consumerism arrived and the whole country was immersed in the modern atmosphere of capitalist culture. This gave a new identity to the theatrical audience as the customer, who expected to be entertained in the theatre rather than educated or enlightened (Liao, 2012: 15-16). Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) illustrates the

postmodern cultural characteristics influenced by late capitalist commodification to be expressed not only in material products, but also penetrates into various spiritual fields. Even the philosophical idea itself becomes a commodity; people live in a vast ocean of images composed of commercialized advertisements, television and cinema and life itself has largely become an imitation and copy of these images. In such a society, the individual's perception of time and space undergoes change, and the depth of history has disappeared. Multi-ethnicity, no centre, anti-authority, fragmentation and shallowness are the main cultural characteristics of this society. Jameson summarized the four basic aesthetic characteristics of postmodernist literature and art as follows: 1) The subject disappears. In the postmodern cultural atmosphere, traditional values and hierarchies are reversed. Personality and style in modernism are eliminated, and the subject becomes a broken illusion. 2) Depth disappears. Modernist art focuses on pursuing utopian ideals and expressing the ultimate truth. Postmodernist art abandons the deep mode of the work itself, no longer has ideas, no longer provides explanations, refuses to tap any meaning, but only pursues pleasure. 3) A sense of history disappears. Modernist art is addicted to historical consciousness in pursuit of depth. In postmodernist art, history only means nostalgia. 4) Distance disappears. In the view of modernist art, distance is the boundary between art and life, subject and object. It is a conscious method of control that enables audiences to think about the work. In post-modern art, due to the disappearance of the subject, depth and sense of history, it only has a stimulating effect on human senses, without any enlightening and inspiring functions. In other words, it emphasizes desire itself. Little Theatre was overwhelmed in the time of this consumerism fetish; the market dispelled the struggle and masked the conflict, appropriating rebellious literature and art into a huge machine of cultural industry to provide vulgar and shallow cultural consumption in a society where everything can become a commodity. Politics has become the

chatter of the leisured, and thus political topics can also become irrelevant and harmless commodities to be easily consumed. The distance between avant-garde drama and commercial drama is very little (Lin, 2007: 164-165).

Therefore, Mo-Lin Wang described political Little Theatre as already a 'Dead cultural movement' (Wang, 1996: 103; Cai, 2008: 62). As most 1980s Avant-garde theatres ideologically refused to link themselves with the governmental system or accepted official funding to avoid being used as a governmental cultural instrument, they also disdained capitalist trends of consumer culture such as performing for sake of the box office. Those theatres insisted on opposing mainstream ideology, and chose to survive in the urban margins to protest against injustice in society (Zhong, 1994: 110-111). However, as the leader, director and playwright of Critical Point Theatre Phenomenon, Qi-Yuan Tian notes in his *An open letter to the theatrical comrades* (1996), many little theatres were forced to incorporate into the mainstream for economic reasons (Tian, 1996: 88). Luo-River Exhibition Group and Note Theatre disbanded in 1986 after one unsuccessful performance; Huan-Xu Theatre Group and the representative Lan-Ling Theatre also disbanded in 1991 due to operating difficulties. U-theatre changed its theatrical form into a performance of percussion mixed with dance in 1993. Little theatre troupes constantly disappeared from the margins or moved closer to the centre over time (Chi, 2002: 46-47; Lu, 2003: 3; Lin, 2007: 90).

Playwright and director, Qiao Zhong, indicates in his *Crying of Asia* (1994) the reason that many Taiwanese Little Theatre troupes disbanded in the '90s. Zhong argues that, besides the economic reasons, experimental politic ideologies failed to interest the audience (Zhong, 1994: 29). Sen Ma critically states that the 'political character' of 1980s Little Theatre had not fully matured in 1990s, by losing their main critical subjects, the remaining Little Theatres were either gradually absorbed into the

anti-mainstream consciousness of alternative theatre, or behaved more aggressively, rebelling for rebellion's sake; it was full of experimental possibility, but also the democratization of Taiwan society led to a lack of interest in these subjects. (Ma, 2010: 107; 1996: 23-24). Wei-Ran Chi criticizes those post-modern style of the 'Anti-literary play', which refused to offer meaning or clues to interpretation, utilizing the strategies of 'Pure play, Cross gender, Random collage' (Chi, 2003: 11) with meaningless mumbles or ravings, which made the play more and more ambiguous or difficult to follow (Lu, 2003:62-63). Anti-literature, non-linear narratives, provoking or violating body performance were often disliked by the 1990s audiences as dull or baffling. Audiences became repelled or even afraid of Little Theatre (Zhong, 1994: 110; Cai, 2008:59). As an example, in 1986, Luo-River Exhibition Group presented an avant-garde play *Rumors-Time*, simultaneously taking place in all the corners of Taipei Art museum. However, without enough direction, choreography or rehearsal, the collective improvisations failed to attract an audience and received little discussion or positive reviews; the group disbanded soon after this experimental performance (Lu, 2009). A similar situation happened with Huan-Xu Theatre Group's *Eternal Spells*, first performed in 1985. Adapting the traditional Chinese novel 'Sou Shen Ji (Stories of Immortals)', it told a story straightforwardly, accompanied by visual effects, such as using flags to change scenes or complex lighting. It received high praise from its premiere audience. However, in 1986, the director Nai-Wei Xu produced a second revision of *Eternal Spells* with no storyline. Xu was rather focused on visual effects such as theatrical space and mise-en-scène. However, the reaction from audiences, performers and critics were overwhelmingly negative (Zhong, 1994: 116). Another example is in 1989, the *Test explosion in a black box- Little Theatre summer action* was held by Lan-ling Theatre. Huan-Xu Theatre Group sealed the exit of the theatre, locking the audience in the theatre for hours. Ming-Ye Cai records the

event, which ended with the audience calling the police and saying, 'It was like being raped!' (Cai, 1989). Yong-Ping Li, the leader of Huan-Xu Theatre Group, stated as apologising after the performance that the audience would 'never forgive' such treatment (Zhong, 1994: 116).

Taiwanese democratization was considered to be completed, but the tone of political resistance remained. Without this radical agenda, Little Theatre lacked a sense of purpose and identity (Zhou, 2002: 21; Chiu, 2013:94). Huan-Xu Theatre Group's final play *The wind of violence* (1991) explored the violence of 28th February Incident, and is considered a representative masterpiece of political theatre from the '90s, as it criticized the KMT government while enjoying full KMT government funding. (Zhong, 1994: 116; Cai, 2008: 59). Critical Point Theatre Phenomenon's '*Sie's Girl*' (1994) openly mocked the national flags of ROC and the US, and made fun of Kai-Shek Chiang's picture. The actors even sang the national song of the People's Republic of China (PRC) during the play. Such radical content was unimaginable for the 1980s extreme political theatre, but failed to surprise or satisfy the audience in the '90s (Ma, 1996: 22). Taiwanese audiences were indifferent to or repulsed by political plays, particularly when the ideology was different from their own. For example, the U-theatre's '*Retrial Wei, Jing-Sheng*' (1989) presented a political 'Open Forum' on stage with graduate students debating for political issues between Taiwan and China. In the middle of the forum, some of the audience started to clamor and criticize the performance, and the performance ended in a scuffle (Cai, 2008: 61).

The chairman of National Theatre Company of China, Ke-Huan Lin, is a long-term observer of Taiwanese theatre; he criticized '90s Taiwanese Little Theatre as follows:

The earlier generations were lamented, and generally trapped in a deep sense of disappointment and emptiness. And the young generations rebelled for rebellion itself, lost their history and memory; and made those modern issues as violence, sexual inversion, homosexuality or feminism, etc., reduced to the clumsy imitation of Western Postmodern culture. (Lin, 2007: 13)

Lin indicates an unresolvable anxiety of political expression and the ubiquitous weariness of the Taiwanese after the abolition of martial law; as Taiwanese theatrical critic Hui-Ling Chou argues that this anxiety is a reaction to historical and cultural trauma, which has created a 'victim complex' in Taiwanese theatre, critics and audience. The symbol of autocracy was suddenly gone when martial law was lifted, but left a huge wound. Chou argues this might explain the character of Little Theatre in the '90s (Chou, 2002: 21; Lu, 2003: 88; Liao, 2000: 92).

Ming-De Zhong and Hui-Ling Zhou analyse the beginning of Little Theatre, which began as a fledgling movement, hoping to learn actively from the newest modern Western theatrical aesthetics and dramaturgy to rebel against traditional theatrical stereotypes (especially those inherited from China). However, in the 1990s, concepts like post-modernism were not integrated, but rather imitated, regarding post-modernism as a high class or fashionable artistic style, without understanding the context of culture and logic behind it (Zhong, 1999: 240; Zhou, 2002: 20-22; Lu, 2003: 28). Mo-Lin Wang criticized every educated youth at the time imagined themselves living in this 'post-modernity', which was actually a follow-up to a popular expression of American contemporary art-style. It was different from the phenomenon in Europe that discussed contemporary capitalism in the context of Western philosophy. Wang describes this retrogressive situation, using the term 'Hollow scene', implying that 1990s Little Theatre was a form of therapy, to address the depression and dissatisfaction of Taiwan's youth, which lacked political stability and used formal aesthetics directly from Western ideas of postmodernism, post-

industrialism or late capitalism without a particular political ideology, even lacking the understanding of politics itself; their initial success was attributed to Western theatrical methods and experiences introduced at the time. This provided the methodology timely for those intellectual youths to break through the school doors and communicate directly with society. Little Theatre became the stage of self-identification and self-expression of intellectual youth and their subculture. However, this method holds within it contradictions, from the beginning: on the one hand, the theatre workers are full of concern about local history and public life. On the other, there is a narcissistic consciousness and condescending self-esteem. Many performances are lost in self-revelation. Presenting a kind of lonely avant-garde attitude surrounded by narcissistic formalist texts that fail to achieve general communication with the audience and are finally rejected by audiences. Under the pressure of the market, some popular avant-garde theatre completely dissolved, losing its consistent political attitude of challenging social systems or political taboos, and instead either repeating old stereotypes or merely making clever entertainment instead (Wang, 1996: 116; Lu, 2003: 28; Lin, 2007: 63; Huang, 2015: 8-10).

1-5 The Taiwanese political crisis of populism and new political playwriting

Alexis de Tocqueville in a letter to M. de Freslon in 1857 wrote of his concerns about American-style democracy:

What saddens me is, not that our society is democratic, but that the vices which we have inherited and acquired make it so difficult for us to obtain or to keep well-regulated liberty. And I know nothing so miserable as a democracy without liberty (cited from Kirk, 1953: 206).

These worries echoed many conservatives' concerns about the French Revolution's controversy over liberty and governance, which led political decision-making in pursuing democratic polities to become unregulated or irrational. Leo-Strauss (1959; 1963) argues that the development of liberal democracy often makes people mistakenly believe that an ideal liberal democratic society entails the rule of the public masses. However, in the case of limited resources, the public often does not have the ability or time to manage public affairs. Therefore, when faced with conflicts between different rights and values, decisions are made by a number of people in the democratic mechanism, or even by the market. James Buchanan (1977) pointed out that the re-allocation of human sources and capital will cause social pain and thus politicians tend to choose economic policies that avoid this, thus forming the pattern of a 'democracy-induced deficit'. Geoffrey Brennan (1997) states that people express their opinions on public policy, focusing on current spiritual consumer behavior. Bryan Caplan (2007) further pointed out that people tend to advocate one set of ideals in public, but support another set that benefits them, without even seeing a contradiction between the two.

French philosopher Jacques Rancière (1995; 2007) illustrated the contemporary dominance of democratic politics as an individualistic liberal view that celebrates the freedom provided by the logic of globalized capitalism; the government uses the ‘demos/people’ as the basis for a consensus structure, in which ‘politics’ is actually controlled by technical bureaucracy, scientific experts (in statistics, sociology and political science) and the global financial system. The government formulates its own laws, cultivating elites with similar backgrounds. Government officials concurrently serve or appoint a trusted person to serve as the management of the state-owned company. There is a common interest relationship between political parties and public projects. The consortium has obtained qualifications for election through a large amount of investment. However, most people still believe that through the design and restrictions of various democratic election systems (such as term of office, upper limit of election expenses, etc.), the ‘institutional uncertainty’ at the core of democracy can be maintained to achieve a balance of power. But in fact, there are various forms of monopoly and privatization in society, and the political and economical affairs are controlled by oligarchs. This is similar to the status of ‘Post-democracy’ as Colin Crouch describes (2000). Crouch refers to the decline of democracy in contemporary politics caused by neoliberal globalization, which symbolizes that the two pillars representing democratic ideals – equality and sovereignty of the people – have been eroded under the principle of marketization (Rancière, 1995: 28-30, 52-53, 1999: 102, 2007: 96; Mouffe, 2019: 104). In response to the decline of democracy caused by oligarchization, the silent majority of people as a unit may begin to unite against it. As Chantal Mouffe states, the starting point of populism is when elitist liberalism has ignored the ideal of democratic political tradition and people feel frustration or discontent, and gradually lose their willingness to participate in politics rationally (Mouffe, 2005: 52-54; Taggart, 2000: 125). Cas Mudde (2004) and Ernesto Laclau

(2007) each both define populism as a discourse strategy, a method of doing politics; the strategy divides a society into two camps of ‘people’ and ‘elites’ who advocate opposite positions, thereby mobilizing ‘underdogs’ against ‘those in power’ (Mudde, 2004: 543-546; Laclau, 2005: 76). Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell further explain populism as an ideology used to unite the sovereign people to antagonize groups of the ‘anti-people’ dominant bloc or the ‘dangerous outsiders/others’, establishing an internal antagonistic frontier that distinguishes our own people from the enemy. Thus, the spirit of populism is a warning light to remind society and politics of a crisis, which is usually aimed at issues that elites ignore under the current political consensus (Albertazzi, 2008: 3-7; Kazin, 2017: 22).

However, in Taiwan’s case, the reason that populist tendencies prevailed after democratization was not only because of the domestic ongoing struggle for Chinese/Taiwanese national identity caused by Taiwan’s colonial ‘history bloc’, but also, as Jonathan Manthorpe stated (2008), that Communist China (PRC) continues to press its claims of sovereignty over Taiwan. Based on the particular experience of nationals’ basic rights being constantly infringed by the external other (China), there is a lack of trust in ‘administration according to law’, which is seen to benefit only those with a vested interest. This provides a shortcut for speculative politicians and activists, avoiding the existing path within the system and instead encouraging people to rise up, united through the will of the people against specific ‘people’s enemies’. Here, populism seems to lose its original purpose of supervising democratic oligarchs and become a tool for achieving political ends (Huang, 2014: 56).

Populist ideas had already played an important role in the process of democratization in the ’90s, as mentioned; in the confrontation with the Wild Lily student movement, President Teng-Hui Lee finally accepted Professor Hai-Yuan Qu and 50 student representatives’ appeal and promised to offer reforms. The Wild Lily

movement believed that their purpose had been achieved. Thereafter, Lee led six constitutional amendments in his two terms to honour this political commitment. However, Lee used the support from the people to justify pressuring the conservatives within the KMT to proceed with the reform; at the same time, as the KMT controlled the majority of seats in the National Assembly, Lee also blocked constitutional amendment programs from opposition parties or civil organizations (Huang, 2014: 53). Lee's strategy was criticized as 'Populist Authoritarianism'. Kwang-Kuo Hwang criticizes the fourth constitutional amendment in 1994 as using 'public opinion' to achieve legitimacy when the real purpose is implementing some particular political figures' personal wills and interests. The KMT offered eight treaties as the guiding principles for the amendment process; most proposals from opposition parties or no party were blocked in the first run; and that constitutional amendment was thus named the 'one person constitutional amendment' (Hwang, 2003: 65-68). Scholars such as Zhen-Huan Wang and Young-Xiang Qian found that, through this process, a representative politician obtained 'most people's support' to construct a legitimate foundation for their political actions, but did not give people real participation, or opportunities to express their views. Thus, although the will of the people was enacted, this retains many elements of authoritarianism rather than a real democracy (Wang, 1995: 30-31; 42-47).

After the presidential election in 2000, power changed hands peacefully and Lee resigned as chairman of the KMT; Taiwan did not repeat the mistakes of strongman politics in South American populism. President Lee utilized populism to successfully accelerate Taiwanese democratization (Huang, 2014: 54), and his successor President Shui-Bian Chen also sought, through direct appeal to the public, to legitimise his political behaviour. In Chen's two terms, the DPP has never held more than half the seats in the Legislative Yuan. Therefore, 'populism' is his main strategy to confront

the unfriendly congress, consisting mainly of opposition parties. Chen firstly continued his image from the presidential election as ‘the son of Taiwan’, emphasizing that he was born in a poor Taiwanese farmer family to distinguish himself from his political enemies. Chen also utilizes anti-privilege populism as his core appeal to position the KMT as the ‘Black Gold’ party, organized by vested interests and privileged persons, and calls for the support of the public to eliminate political corruption (Guo, 1998; Matsumoto, 2009: 190).

Taiwanese politician, political critic and senior member of DPP Zhuo-Shui Lin suggested, when Shui-Bian Chen won the 2004 presidential election with a very small margin, that this was due to the hurried decision to merge the presidential election with the ‘defensive referendum’, which asked two questions:

- 1) The Taiwan people insist that the Taiwan Strait issue should be resolved peacefully; if the Chinese Communist Party does not remove the missiles aimed at Taiwan and do not give up the use of force against Taiwan, do you agree with the Government to increase the purchase of anti-missile equipment to strengthen Taiwan’s self-defensive capability?
- 2) Do you agree with the Government to consult with the CCP to promote the establishment of a cross-strait peaceful and stable interactive structure to seek cross-strait consensus and the well-being of the people?

A referendum is always a significant weapon of populism. However, Taiwanese referendum law is deliberately limited in the formulation of the initiative by the means and sets a very high threshold. Therefore, this referendum is related to the election considerations of proposed populism, rather than the function of democratic politics (Huang, 2014: 65-66). Lin states this encouraged President Chen to use more radical electoral strategies to maximize the effectiveness of populism (Lin, 2009: 158-159). Therefore, in the 2004 campaign, President Chen canvassed for candidates and

promised supporters that if they won a majority in congress, the government would re-investigate several political cases in the name of transitional justice. However, Nei-The Wu criticizes this, as President Chen openly announced this moral transitional justice decision during the campaign as a tool of political struggle (Wu, 2005: 13). Here, the purpose of manipulating populism is no longer to present real public opinion, but to provoke the voters' passion, creating favourable conditions for their election; as political researcher You-Zong Zhang describes, this is 'electoral populism', used to stimulate the masses for a short period of time (e.g. the run-up to an election), but quickly dies away when the purpose has been achieved (Zhang, 2009: 107-8; Huang, 2014: 59).

As mentioned, populism imagines that the 'people' share a common positive position, and therefore they intuitively refuse to negotiate with the 'elite' 'other' or 'enemy'. This puts the situation into a dichotomy and intensifies the opposition between the two camps, as its final demand is to expel the people's enemies rather than compromise (Mudde, 2004; Mizuno, 2009: 3). Because of the historical memories of persecution and international pressure from China, it is easy for the Taiwanese to construct an 'other'. Therefore, many mainlanders or those with the Chinese (ROC) identity in Taiwan chose one side, and those with a Taiwanese identity who sought Taiwan's independence chose the other. However, the essence of a democratic electoral system is to ensure the coexistence of different political views and this enabled politicians who utilized electoral populism to win the election: their purposes were only to pursue political interests for themselves and the camp they represented. This set off a vicious circle; for many voters who accepted the appeals of electoral populism, and imagined they were confronting the evil 'other' during the process, the results of the election will likely give them a deep sense of frustration with democratic politics, as what they were promised often was not realized. This is

particularly true of those in search of Taiwanese identity. In summary, electoral populism created a widespread feeling of disgust with electoral culture and politics. However, because voting is still the only political means of the people, ‘voting with tears’ becomes a common psychological term for Taiwanese voters (Song 2007; Huang, 2014: 63-69).

Such contradictory emotions formed a new political theatre that criticized the post-democratic era after 2000. The distinguishing characteristic of the theatre in this period is unlike previous experimental or avant-garde theatre: the theatre and dramaturgy of this period became frivolous giving up criticism, playing with ‘language’ or pop-culture for entertainment. Drama critic Shan-Lu Yu explains how, after the abolition of Martial Law, the whole of Taiwanese literary ideology lacked energy, as was also the case in political theatre. As the oppressing force was removed, which had defined the former drama aesthetics style of the Little Theatre Movement (as Lan-ling Theatre or the first generation of Little Theatre against the traditional Chinese drama; and the second generation of Little Theatre against the first generation), little theatre lost its shape. Once the object of the revolution had disintegrated, art cannot find a critical entry. More and more theatre troupes created works related to daily experiences, using family, romance and political irony, but the critical purpose was lost, and instead they were forced to disband or pursue public tastes and box office preferences. Some Little Theatre was influenced by liberalism and started to work on marginal issues or taboos such as lust, queer, sexual abuse or sexual liberation. However, in the varied and extensive landscape of Taiwanese theatre around 2000, Xiao-Fen Wu noted a ‘kind of self-narrative anxiety around in most of these works, they all face a stalemate as [to] “where to go”?’ (Wu, 1997: 161-167). Shan-Lu Yu confirms this anxiety existed in this post-democratic society: the life experience of modern people and the social relationship between individuals were

often in a state of ‘alienation’ because was no common enemy to oppose and thus no need to unite (Yu, 2009a).

At this time, an important Taiwanese playwright, Wei-Ran Chi, created the ‘New-language’ dramaturgy to criticize social and political phenomena, and gained huge success with both theatrical critics and audience reviews. In 1996, Chi published his first play *The Night White Thief*, which attracted great attention from the theatrical community. According to the *Performing Arts* magazine, theatre workers and scholars were all excited about this play, as Mo-Lin Wang highly praised it: ‘Finally, there is a modern theatre in Taiwan’ (Chiu, 2013: 124). Chi then launched two trilogies in following years, which became his representative works: the *Family Trilogy* and the *Mah-jong Trilogy*. These made Chi an unprecedented model of influence in terms of both audiences and box office records, the critics praised it as ‘a barrier of Chi, Wei-Ran’ as no one can surpass him in Taiwanese Modern Theatre. (Jiang, 2004). Chi is the first successful playwright to mix Taiwanese dialect into his writing. Using the mixed language pattern refers to Taiwan’s complex historical background. He also likes to use wordplay, such as puns, homonyms, multilingual terms, buzzwords, references to the Classics, witticisms, jingles, advertising words, swearwords, trash talk and so on (Zhang, 2006a: 51). As Chi ironically mimics everyday language and media language from Taiwanese popular culture and consumption, his characters express their true emotions through clichés (Zhang, 2007: 26). Therefore, this designed dialogues might appear at first to be meaningless chatting, but actually represents Chi’s postmodern view that people are no longer the centre of language, but become the product of language, and the only response is to ‘play’ with language.

Chi’s plays echo the prevailing electoral populism of the industrialized and commercialized society in the late ’90s; his two trilogies reveal anxiety and concern for the decline of family ethics and personal material needs, and continuing

dissatisfaction with the political conditions. Therefore, Chi's plays depict a close relationship with Taiwanese society that can further be used to understand cultural images of Taiwan around 2000 (Chiu, 2013:11). The *Family Trilogy* are: *The Night White Thief* (1996), *No Wind Nor Rain* (1999) and *Long Time No See* (2004). These stories cover the 1980s to the twenty-first century, which was the transition period in Taiwan from martial dictatorship to commercial hegemony. Therefore, Chi uses three slices of time, to show the innermost relationship of a family over time, as metaphors for the social time and space changes after the abolition of martial law. For example, this can be seen in absent father figures: the paralyzed father in *The Night White Thief*, the declared dead father in *No Wind Nor Rain*, and the absent father in *Long Time No See*. The authority of the father character implies the totalitarian power of politics, and Chi reflects that, while suffering in the increasingly superficial socialized culture of commercialization, we do not miss the painful past. Chi encourages people to think about 'survival' in this social and cultural change (Chiu, 2013: 20,31).

The main storyline of *The Night White Thief* is in a theft that occurs in night-time. In the politic investigation, three family members recall the past and tell a collective story of their family history, which is also the colonized history of Taiwan. Their grandfather was a successful Taiwanese businessman who supported the Japanese colonization. This led to the decline of the family fortunes. In their recollection, when the father was young, he had a good education, multilingual abilities (30) and a reputation for rightness, honesty and enthusiasm to help others (71). However, in his wife's opinion, he was a stubborn loser (16) who was unable to save the failing family business and who had an affair (96-97); and for the children who lived in the shadow of domestic violence, their image of the father was extremely negative (86). The characters of this work almost have no 'action': only the mouth constantly moving. The wife finally holds the business up and gradually oversteps the

male patriarch, creating a new hegemony. As her daughter testified: 'In the past, she often said that my father did not discuss [things] with others, and now she is the same. All by her ruling, we have no place to express our views' (47). The wife asks her husband in Taiwanese before he passes away: 'Could it be wrong that I teach our children in your way?' (97) Here, Chi's motif of 'Family' as the basic unit of a country seems to lose its function and break into pieces when family members treat each other as suspects.

No Wind Nor Rain is about a father who is missing for years, life or death unknown. The children plan a funeral in order to inherit his property. This story is about the transition period between the destruction of the authoritarian era and the reconstruction of the new order; and unavoidably recovering the ugly 'truth' from the past. In the eyes of the three brothers, their father was a popular, loyal, bold and masculine man; however, the story reveals he was actually an exhibitionist who frequently harassed young girls on the street. Chi is questioning all these new discovered 'truths'. Is the family/country going to be reborn or destroyed? The two scenes of this play are set respectively in 'Taipei old apartment bottom floor' and 'The top floor of the new building in Taipei', which implies economic progress and the rise of civilization. However, the things those brothers are doing are utilitarian and even immoral. As the first and second brothers 'rationally' analyse the situation to make things more appropriate or explainable, they create a new 'fact', hiding their patricidal behaviour, comforting their guilt or maybe seizing a little more property; this 'fact' makes the truth far more difficult to reveal. The youngest son who behaves 'irrationally' is the only one to care why their father left. After a series of struggles with his family, he finally figures out the reason is the family itself, and announces he will leave it also (Chiu, 2013: 27-37).

Finally, in *Long Time No See*, Chi further abandons the whole value of traditional family and the sentimental feeling of losing it. There are no father figures in this play, and most settings are outside the home, such as a convenience store, department store or in the car, showing how commercial strength has penetrated and replaced traditional interpersonal relationships. In this individualistic age, everyone can be the patriarch to themselves and everywhere can be home, deconstructing the idea of ‘family’. In Chi’s play, people are ruled by the new and irresistible values of commercial logic. Here is a dialogue between two colleagues:

Worker A: I recently find, my best mate ...

Worker B: Best mate.

Worker A: It could be a bank, or a credit card.

Worker B: I see.

Worker A: Best mate means ...

Worker B: Yes?

Worker A: In the worst moment of you ...

Worker B: He will support you.

Worker A: When the moment you most need it.

Worker B: He will help you.

Worker A: That’s right.

Worker B: That’s right. (225)

It is like living in the post-industrial society that every character shrinks to only its functional names as Clerk, Customer, Man reading paper or even A, B, C, D. Those roles seem like containers manufactured by a factory; they are so similar that they can directly replace each other. For example, in a scene when the four characters A, B, C and D are playing Mah-jong, the main character Xiao-Ming takes D away due to his debt; the remaining three immediately call E as a replacement (251). “Xiao-Ming” is a name of the model used by the authority the primary school textbook. It presents it as a ‘normal’ image of educated Taiwanese (192). The irony is that this Xiao-Ming was

named by his father from the textbook, and is a cruel, bloody gangster and even almost raped his own aunt (Chiu, 2013: 28). Chi's *Family Trilogy* uses the deconstruction of family as a national fable to discuss what Taiwanese society became after the disintegration of authority. Chi creates a detective-style puzzle structure; characters are constantly talking about stories that are conflicting or contradictory, highlighting the 'political character' of their language. Interpretation is a matter of personal choice: each character gives their own version of the truth. Chi argues that these multiple sources prevent clear understanding of Taiwanese history: 'Can only cover the coffin, but cannot be determined' (Chi, 1998: 23).

The *Mah-jong Trilogy* includes: *Every Night Mah-jong* (1997), *Surprise Party* (2003) and *Countdown* (2007), respectively depicting the stories of Taiwanese born in the '50s, '60s, and '70s. Each generation faced different political challenges and difficulties that constructed their personalities. As the 1950s were the most turbulent age of Taiwan, fighting the ubiquitous autocratic authority, *Every Night Mahjong* is about four college friends who promise to play Mahjong all night. During the game, as they talk about their college days, it is revealed that they all once had ambitions and romantic ideals. They were actually the first generation of Taiwanese in the taboo era that can take the risk to challenge the authority, and they had planned on performing a play based on a banned novel *Jin-Shui Aunt* (1976). This brings all these four characters great feelings of superiority and self-confidence in their identities. They are impatient with the younger generation because they have 'no faith'. However, when these people face reality, they also see failure and corruption in themselves. This contradiction was exposed in discussion, as the performance was finally stopped because of the outbreak of the Formosa Incident. And this event became the trauma of these four characters and a constant regret: 'Is it possible the

choice is a turning point?', 'If we insist on performing, will life be different?' (Chiu, 2013: 59).

These 1950s generation characters are angry that they fought for their ideals, but failed to implement what they believed. Despite the passage of time, the characters remain in the moment of history, in which they still hold some values of the past. They play Mah-jong all night to form a circle of meaningless repetition to numb themselves against facing reality. When they are worried the sun is coming up, one suggests: 'Could we pull down the curtain so it is night again?' (78) His characters are the first to face reality, but also the first to wish to escape it (Chiu, 2013: 61).

The *Surprise Party* is about the 1960s generation, who are the generation of the Wild Lily student movement. Three friends from the student movement get together after many years and chat about their glorious past: 'Things that the last generation could not do were completed by our generation' (118). In reality, those from the 1960s were the first generation to benefit from the political rebellion because the movement was a success; many 'martyrs' of the student movement become the new core of power because of the party rotation in the 1990s. One of the characters Da-Niu depends on his relationship with media and politicians based on his position in the student movement. He becomes a rich political broker. Another character A-Cheng has just returned to Taiwan with his PhD, behaving like a lofty intellectual who wants to focus on teaching and researching and does not want to get involved in politics. However, he has already discussed a future working position with the government. The core of this play is a deconstruction of the myth of student movement as calm bystanders. The tales of heroic activities such as hunger strike or hospitalisation were just half-truths, and members of student movement sold each other out and made a compromise. Lao-Ding was the leader of the movement but disappeared after the victory party. The rumour is that he killed himself by jumping to his death, and this

metaphor of ‘Falling quickly from very high places’ (115) is used to depict the process of falling from a pure ideal. Lao-Ding’s disappearance is an announcement that the ‘ideal is dead.’ Xiao-Ma responds,

After the victory party, the whole situation was like a sharp fall; with no warning, no one had time for the parachute, so directly down to the end. The most staggering thing is, the people we once supported turned out to be no different from those we overthrow. We said reform, reform, what “re” did we actually “form”? Those comrades we had to fight together, well, they do quite well now. Some are high-level attendants, some are councilmen or legislators, some are unit directors, and even Da-Niu who doesn’t directly engage in politics; he also shared a lot. But I want to ask these people: Where is the beautiful new world we look forward to? (130)

This is close to the real Wild Lily student movement. Cun-Ji Zheng stated that

The student movement generation must face the ideal at the old time. Whether it is left or right, how they deal with power when they are in power? The things they once against to, they cannot do after they get controlled. It is the most basic requirement. But I am very disappointed. After the generation in power, there is no real difference. (He, 2001: 69)

Surprise Party also uses meta-dramaturgy of ‘rewinding’, to make characters repeat what they have they just said or done, which implies the repetitive destiny of the Taiwanese. Most characters are aware of this and feel strange, but Da-Niu never notices he has been ‘rewound’; this is intended as Chi’s criticism of the arrogant and unreflecting elitist attitude at the foundation of Taiwanese populism. Chi is not attempting to negate the merits of the student movement generation, but he hints that their choices or actions are calculated risks.

The protagonists of *Countdown* are the 1970s generation Taiwanese, growing up at the end of martial law when the social atmosphere was avoiding political issues or historical reality. They are also the first generation of Taiwanese to grow up in a stable and prosperous environment. They enjoyed science, technology, and the development of the internet as part of modern industrialized consumerism. The scenes are set in the 'skylight' of the top floor to symbolize 1970s psychology, as Chi describes:

The spectacular skylight occupies the left-wing of the stage, which should provide an excellent view of the building. But because of the proximity of the other building, most of the sight has been obscured, and the window reflects the grey walls of the building and the flickering electronic signboard. (Chi, 2007: 15)

Chi shows the coldness and superficiality of this generation: self-centeredness, materialistic and begrudgingly concerned with others. Here, Chi acknowledges that he intentionally chose a biased perspective from which to depict the '70s generation. He uses the meta-dramaturgy when two young characters complain about the play ('The playwright seriously discriminated against us youths.' 'Yes, how can we be so superficial?'). Chi's purpose is to emphasize the most important motif of these two trilogies as the 'unspeakable memories' between individual and family/history/country; these memories had been suppressed for so long that, even when they are released, shame and sadness forces the characters to 'silence' the unpleasant past; this means those memories become suspicious, obsolete, ambiguous or even forgotten by the younger generation (Chiu, 2013: 100).

Chi's plays are widely popular in Taiwan and this may be because of his comedic dialogue. Chi's philosophy is that meaningless trash talk which is omnipresent now; therefore, the meaning of trash talking is to reveal the absurd reality, constantly

discussing nonsense (Lu, 2003: 72). Chi uses talking as the main stage movement of his characters, with simultaneously consistent and contradictory moments between the subject and what they're saying. Chi obsesses over manhood, creating many strong male figures with mouths full of aggressive words, but he undermines their masculinities in terms of taking action or responsibility (Zhang, 2006a: 51). These internal and external inconsistencies make those roles more complex, forgivable and funnier. Also, Chi is aware of the political nature of language, and plays with meta-cognition, intertextual and parodic means. He describes this as an 'exorcism' ritual to reveal the fictitiousness of power constructed and operating underneath the text (Chiu, 2013: 128; Chi, 2006: 40). For example, in *Surprise Party* two grown-ups discuss a restaurant as follows:

Ma: I had been there, not bad. But never ask for their fried shrimp.

Niu: Why?

Ma: The shrimp is small, too much powder.

Niu: Powder-stingy?

Ma: Powder-powdery-stingy. (125)

The adults spoke deliberately, pretending to be cute and using meaningless 'virtual words'. Chi believes modern people want to escape from the heaviness of meaningful communication, but are also afraid of the loneliness of silence. Therefore, they use 'nonsense' or 'chitchat' to express feelings of paralysis in daily life; this also happens in Chi's other plays. These plots are closely related to the real status in Taiwan, while the characters reflect the 'powerlessness' of the Taiwanese dilemma, which they are unable to confront. They gradually shift from feeling powerless to a state of paralysis and no feeling (Chen, 2007: 96).

However, the most severe insufficiency of Chi's plays, as theatrical critic Cheng-His Chen describes, is that while he has captured the difficulties of Taiwanese environment and involuntary fate, he only offers jokes or cynical methods of self-comfort such as masturbation (Chen, 2004: 30). Therefore, behind all the shallow humour there is a kind of deep and non-specific sadness. In *The Night White Thief*, the first scene is set in a messy room in which the television reports that a devastating flood is coming; and when the mother asks her son to clean up the house, the son answers that cleaning only makes it worse. This implies that this house is doomed to be destroyed by the upcoming natural disaster (Chiu, 2013: 26; Chen, 2004: 30). This overall pessimistic vision of the future reveals Chi's frustration with the current problems of Taiwan. He refuses to offer any direct solution to those conflicts or disputes because he knows the real causes these problems are to be found in the historical or political structure. Similarly, at the end of *No Wind Nor Rain*, the youngest son finally announces at his missing father's funeral: 'The thing I really did today, is to declare I abolished myself.' By self-destructing and leaving his family, the son doesn't have to deal with the missing father or his property anymore. In short, Chi's dramaturgy is playful, sarcastic and takes a self-indulgent political attitude prepared to let go of everything at any time. The later political situation in the next wave took the form of more radical conflict and serious external threats, which Chi's cynical and ironic dramaturgy seems unable to fully reflect and interact with, and thus his work ceased to meet the needs of the Taiwanese audience. (Lin, 2007: 186).

1-6 Contemporary Taiwanese exterior crisis and political theatre

While the autocratic KMT ruled the ROC, they promoted the 'Political Community' of the nation as the Republic of China in ethnically diverse Taiwan. This was a politically constructed policy to establish a collective subject for seeking reunification with China by military means (a slogan at the time called its supporters to 'Counterattack the mainland'), as officially recorded in the Constitution of the ROC. However, in the transition to democracy, opposition parties seized the long-suppressed Taiwanese local ideology and combined with the public opinion of seeking to change the KMT's one-party dictatorship. Partly radical locals formed a separatist identity for seeking Taiwanese independence as their ultimate political goal. It is recorded in the Democratic Progressive Party's programme that their ultimate goal is Taiwan's independence. These differences have structured Taiwan's fundamental two-party system. Originally, although this was inefficient and full of problematic populism, but through the discussion or evolution of the democratic process, it was hoped that the two ideologies/identities might reach some kind of consensus in the future. The regime transfer in 2000 presented a credible view of the Taiwanese political environment that drew people together through political participation and promised a sense of loyalty to the democratic system and recognition of belonging to a common nation called the Republic of China on the island of Taiwan. The authority and the legitimacy of the constitution could be considered a consensus majority (Song, 2007; Rigger, 1999).

As polling shows, the percentage of people supporting reunification with China precipitously decreased from 55% in 1989 to 16% in 1999; people supporting Taiwanese independence rose from 6% in 1989 to 23% in 1999; and the majority support for keeping the current form of government increased from 18% in 1989 to 49% in 1999 (as cited in Lin, 2002: 222). On the other hand, the *United Daily*

published credible survey data on Taiwanese residents' sense of national identity, which showed that in 1989, 52% of those surveyed identified themselves as 'Chinese', 26% as both 'Taiwanese and Chinese', and only 16% as 'Taiwanese'; however, according to the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) statistical results of the Executive Yuan, in 1996, those who identify with 'China' decreased to 20.5%, those who identify with 'Taiwan' increased to 24.9%, and 49.5% identify with both. In 1999, the number of those that identified with 'China' decreased to 13.6%, those who identified with 'Taiwan' increased to 42.5%, and those who identified with both was 38.5%. This trend continued beyond 2000. By 2014, the proportion of people claiming to feel 'Taiwanese' was above 60% while those describing themselves as 'Chinese' dropped to a single digit (as cited in Yang, 2016: 340; Lin, 2004: 95). However, behind this trend, Taiwanese identity had changed and the rise of the People's Republic of China played a critical role.

After 1977, due to the breakdown of diplomatic relations between the US and Taiwan, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with China, the two countries either side of the straits stopped short of actual military conflict. After long-term mutual denial, a meeting took place between the semi-official representatives of PRC and ROC in Hong Kong, which then achieved the 'Consensus of 1992'. This Consensus agreed with the 'One China' principle as both sides recognize there is only one China, but holds their own definition of what entails a legitimate representative. Therefore, this also has been described as 'one China, two system proposal.' Although President Teng-Hui Lee and President Shui-Bian Chen had successively denied the existence of common understanding or agreement between Taiwan and China, PRC insists on the principle of China as one undivided sovereignty and has vowed to use military force in response to any formal declaration of independence by Taiwan, or if PRC leaders decide that peaceful unification is no longer possible, as China stated in

their anti-secession law (People's Daily, 14 March 2005).

In 1996, before Taiwan's first direct presidential election, China used military exercises and test-fired missiles as an excuse, intending to prevent Teng-Hui Lee from claiming Taiwan's independence (in the name of ROC). This was the first Taiwan Strait missile crisis, and ended due to the intervention of US President Bill Clinton. However, as the next President Shui-Bian Chen and his party DPP are more intensely in favour of independence (in the name of Taiwan), the peculiar relationship with China became tenser. And the Taiwanese perceived it as an unprecedentedly urgent need to deter the Chinese military threat, and contain the political infiltration of the PRC. The Chinese government at the time, under the impression of Tiananman Square Massacre and its policy toward Tibet and Xinjiang, in the eyes of most the Taiwanese, still retained the image of totalitarianism and using force to suppress dissidents (Chen, 2011a: 602). A survey after the presidential election in 2000 found that 62% of those questioned thought the PRC's military exercises would weaken the Taiwanese people's wish to unify with China. When asked whether Taiwan should accept the 'one China, two systems' proposal if China continued its military threats, only 4% said Taiwan should accept the proposal; 74% were in favour of rejecting the proposal; and 72% said China's military threats didn't make them feel pessimistic about Taiwan's future (Lin, 2002: 236-238). On the contrary, the Chinese threat created a sense of common suffering and oppression, uniting the Taiwanese and strengthening their awareness of political differences across the strait. This transferred from the nationalistic identity conflict between Taiwanese and Chinese (which was inherited from ROC) and overlapped with a new wave of populism against the hostile PR China, as a community of foreign dominating forces, approaching Taiwan with hostility, a lack of democracy, social classification and political privilege. Therefore, local political parties seeking re-election began to use slogans such as 'Save our own

country' or 'Taiwanese Taiwan' to challenge the legitimacy of the ROC, haunted by the ghosts of past authoritarianism and exaggerating the threat of hostile China (and the benefits of unity to contain it). This aroused the dissatisfaction of voters against China, the KMT and the CCP, as well as increasing the risk of conflict between different groups (Achen & Wang, 2017; Snyder, 2000: 40).

There was a major shift in 2001 after China joined the World Trade Organization, followed by the ensuing world financial crisis of 2007-2008. Chinese economic strength gradually became one of the most significant commercial trading partners under globalization. Taiwan became more and more isolated, while PRC amended its relationship with the US and refused to have diplomatic relations with any country that recognizes the ROC, as China has consistently claimed sovereignty over Taiwan and asserted that the ROC is no longer a legitimate country. Although Taiwan is fully self-governing, most international organizations that have a relationship with China either refuse to grant membership to Taiwan (such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Health Assembly (WHA)), or only allow Taiwan to participate as a non-state actor, named 'Chinese Taipei' (such as happens at the Olympic games). The situation is increasingly unfavourable to Taiwan, as can be seen from the incident when President Shui-Bian Chen suggested a referendum on Taiwan joining the UN under the name Taiwan. This time China did not directly intervene, but instead asked US President George W. Bush to stop Shui-Bian Chen's 'disorder' (Goldstein & Chang, 2008).

Otherwise, because of the highly capitalized social structure and long-term economic stagnation; huge numbers of Taiwanese enterprises or businessmen chose to work in China or rely on Chinese economic circles. Therefore, the greater threatening from China was transformed from military to economics. (See Forsythe 2014) As the diplomatic relationship is unequal, Taiwan had fewer bargaining capabilities and

would have been unilaterally ignored if does not obey China's conditions. Therefore, under Chen's tenure as DPP's political idea is tending to achieve Taiwanese independence; China starts to threaten Taiwan with economy blockade and sanction. This policy exacerbates Taiwanese divided into a self-conflicting situation. As one group is suggesting to compromise with China to save Taiwanese economy and another group is becoming more patriotic to resist further connections with PRC. As the ruling DPP government attempted to approve the assertion as the enactment of a new constitution by legislating this new identity of 'Taiwan'; to separate from China at the end of Chen's tenure. However, because of reduced economic growth and the austerity policies implemented after the economic crisis, which affected most of the middle classes, the KMT increased its majority in the Legislative Yuan while its nominee Ying-Jeou Ma won the presidency in 2008 (Wong, 12th March 2008). They campaigned on a promise of better cooperation with the PRC under a policy of 'mutual non-denial.' Ma acknowledges the 'Consensus of 1992' which saw two regimes with different interpretations as a temporary measure until a solution becomes available in his presidential inauguration speech.

However, Ma's compromising to the One-China policy did not reduce the diplomatic and military tensions with the PRC; as the PRC still states they are the only legitimate government of China and takes Taiwan as the tantamount position of Hong Kong or Macao. The anxiety and discontent of angry Taiwanese produced a series of social and student movements and reached its peak as the Sunflower Movement on 18th March 2014. The demanding of this movement is mainly against the KMT government legislates the controversial commercial contract as the *Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement* with the PRC in the absence of enough congressional supervision. Protesting crowds surrounded the Legislative Yuan, and with the conflicting rise into youths and students occupied the Legislative Yuan House for 24

days and claiming the assembly of 500,000 people in the around space for a sit-in protest demonstration. (Kuo, 2016: 95-96, Chou, 2015: 1-2) As in the documentary book, *This is not Sunflower student Movement: 318 movement full record* (2015), it states: 'This is not just a student movement, but there are actually more people in all kinds of life: workers, farmers, businessmen, office workers and more people who are seen as not having the ability to participate in decision making.' (Yan, 2015: 371) The person who agrees with the Sunflower Movement considered it reflected the civil disobedience; and as a result, it successfully stopped the legislation and created following significant political changes as made the party rotation again.

President Ing-Wen Tsai with the majority of DPP parliamentary seats won the next election in 2016. However, the success of this student movement, in essence, is a victory of populist politics; as it created a simplistic story about good and evil, and put every issue related to China simplified in the populist emotions as anti-China which equated to anti-authoritarian and anti-President Ma or anti-KMT; and the original purpose of being against unregulated trade with China was promoted, suggesting a newly emerged 'Taiwanese Community' and a new 'nation' of Taiwan. Li-Hsin Kuo analyses the photography collection of the movement *Before the Dawn* (2014). Kuo states the ritual scenes of retrospective picture of Taiwan independence pioneer Nan-Rong Zheng and those slogans as 'dark-dawn', 'ignorant-enlighten'; it reflected the participants' pure, simple but ignorant enthusiasm; but also reproduced the collective state of this generation of youths as easily falling into the self-moving, self-celebrating and self-sacred atmosphere; they regard the overthrow of authority (KMT, CCP) as justification for their protest (Kuo, 2016: 101-102). However, as Max Weber discusses, a nation is originally a relationship in which people dominate others by means of legitimate force. For any nation to exist, the ruled must obey the rulers (Weber, 1921: 396-7) Therefore, political continuity will always be partly

authoritative and the protesters' behaviour nullifies the democratic administrative process, imitating the approach of the totalitarian era.



▲ Wang, Mo-Lin's *Wilderness* (2011)

How does Taiwanese political theatre react to these situations? Several previously successful troupes transferred to commercial mainstream theatres. Performance Workshop, Ping-Fong Acting Troupe or Guotuo Theatre performed in China, and accepted the framework of 'Chinese Drama' which incorporated Taiwan as an area of Chinese cultural/political hegemony (Yu, 2011: 67). Under censorship, they must give up the original political critical consciousness; even the most representative playwright as the Performance Workshop Sheng-Chuan Lai deleted some political elements in his plays in order to allow a tour in China; these troupes no longer express their opinions on sensitive topics (Yan, 2013). The remaining contemporary political playwritings in Taiwan can be roughly divided into three types.

First, can be represented by Mo-Lin Wang's *Wilderness* (2011), Wang uses two male characters who have passed their middle age, each suffering from different diseases, they were both defeated from their political and social ideals. Their dialogue reveals they have joined the same social movement in the 80s; they had similar utopian ideals, but finally split for the dispute about whether Taiwan should be unified with China or pursuing independence, they had taken different paths and separated. In this basement full of old newspapers, they memorized for the age full of radical social movements as they are destined to participate in that great transformation process; they were young and fearless, and everything they did is wishing to complete something that can be able to report on the newspaper. This is a play that Mo-Lin Wang claims to be an autobiographical work, and he regards the theatre as a place for discussion and a search for meaning. It is not to 'reproduce' or 'show-show off' anything, but to act directly against the public and sincerely tries to exchange meaning and values. Wang attempts to make the idea of 'revolution' that has been dissolved in the individualized society to regain some respectable quality; for those people who had invested their youth and then felt frustrated about how old and sick they're now. However, Wang is still pessimistic, as those ideals and enthusiasm of the past have turned into the wilderness composed by waste newspaper. In the end, one of the characters chose to leave went back to his hometown and the other ended his life in the small room. This type of political playwriting is through a self-disclosure method to engage its audience; however, it might inevitably fall into a difficult situation that cannot get out. As like Mo-Lin Wang seems so pessimistic, because he thinks he knows what the problem is, but he can't change anything; as for a once-young revolutionary, looking back at the past with a middle-aged body, he will inevitably discover all kinds of ignorance and lack of experience at that moment; but if you want to change something, you will find yourself unable to do anything in middle age

already.

The second type can be represented by Yi-Chen Zhou's *The Rose Coloured Country* (2013), which sets the background to the imaginary future; there are seven typical characters in this play that are intertwined to form five pairs of emotional relationships. It deals with many current issues such as Taiwanese reunification, nuclear power, ethnic groups, land development, and same-sex marriage. With the structure of time and space intertwined; Zhou uses the free access to the past and the future to effectively focus on the current and future comparison of people and social situations. The setting of each character has a typical representative meaning: a pair of same-sex couples in middle school later became a mayor and a social activist; and the left-wing couple in the drama became public employee of the nuclear and biotechnology companies; the conservative girl who once kept the right-wing ideology in China, after being frustrated by all kinds of difficulties in Chinese society, finally retrieves her original Vietnamese culture. The researcher who had been framed by the official culture became a documentary worker. Those positions are left and right, and the identities as unity and independence; but their life experience has turned and changed, and their respective identities intertwined with different backgrounds such as aborigines, new immigrants and Christians. Each element interacts in the plots, all for reasons. For example, when the social activist protests about the over development and strives to preserve the aboriginal tradition to his old lover, the mayor; the mayor questioned him as how his homosexual status could be accepted by tribal traditions or Christianity, which proves the change is necessary. By such a subtle dialectic, Zhou constantly forces the audience to rethink their own ideology and blind spots. However, in the fictional future, Taiwan has experienced the failure of the fifth nuclear power plant, Taiwanese independence referendum was failed and forced to agree the cross-strait reunification; it seems to be sinking all the way. But different

from how other pessimistic prophecies always call the audience to come forward with a warning about to reform before the prophecy comes true; the *Rose of the Country* is more focused on ‘Even if the world gets worse, how can we survive?’ This is the most valuable thing in this play. Rebellion is no longer based solely on the concept of progress, but the necessity of survival, the necessity of self-recognition, and the necessity of gentleness after the vicissitudes of life and humiliation.

The third type is as Wan-Ting Shen and Hui-Min Ruan’s *Siro Heroes - Taiyuan Events* (2017); this type of playwriting focuses on the adaptation of historical events and mostly takes a critical ideology for seeking transitional justice from the authoritative past. As the motivation behind this play which is a mourning about the Tai-Yuan Incident, the real first armed revolution in the name of Taiwan independence in the 1970s which only included five young political prisoners. They were secretly sentenced to death, and their last letters were decrypted after forty years which reveals the Taiwanese sacrifices have been covered by ruler’s history. However, accusing an oppressive authoritarian regime in the past and singing the praises to the liberals who confront it; in some extent, it’s a simplified strategy to sell the ideology behind. Under this simplification, it will remove the space for rational debate and dialectical thinking. Simply put the government and people in opposite positions, just like the French Revolution once did, treating all the ruling class as one immoral community and any people who dare to resist or stand in front of it become heroes, and gave all the credits of democratization to those offenders. If further analyzed, the ideology behind this work wants to promote the value of Taiwanese independence in spite of the fact that it might make the propitiation of Taiwanese society harder to achieve. By deifying the formation of the pursuit of democratization, in another word, it provided a sacred sanctity in their ideology that is not concessive, and such an approach is essentially the most anti-democratic.

These three types of playwriting are, respectively, based on personal experience, imagining the future, or particular historical events. Each addresses the future identity in Taiwan; Mo-Lin Wang as a senior protester ends in a pessimistic tone and questions what all the history of struggle for ‘identity’ means if the ending is like today. Yi-Chen Zhou makes a hypothesis (likely to become a reality) of Taiwan unified with and by China through a referendum, to make the audience consider the ‘subject identity’ that will be lost in reality, as well as revealing that the ‘subject identity’ was collapsed and disabled by the referendum. Wan-Ting Shen and Hui-Min Ruan criticized the tyranny in the authoritarian era, trying to rouse people to recognize an ideal identity as equal to being free. However, the authoritarian power is long over, and the subject of liberal democracy is already mature, so this is more like a self-affirmation that our identity is ‘good enough’, only without the title ‘Taiwanese’. Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami made a speech at the ceremony of the Jerusalem Prize in 2012: ‘Between a high, solid wall and an egg that breaks against it, I will always stand on the side of the egg. Yes, no matter how right the wall may be and how wrong the egg, I will stand with the egg.’ He uses the ‘wall’ as a metaphor for the authoritarian. This passage caused a strong reaction in Taiwan. It seemed that Taiwanese writers also felt obligated to stand on the side of the egg and could not forgive the actions of the totalitarian government. However, what Haruki Murakami didn’t say is how to act when the egg is wrong.

The reason triggered me to write for the Sunflower Movement was because I witnessed an image when countless protesters tried to rush into the Legislative Yuan; during hundreds of angry also excited intruders broke the windows for passing, there’s one policeman, who was helpless but continued to whistle, trying to use the most peaceful way to get people back; I was convinced there’s something wrong. Here, I am not trying to make a moral judgment on this single protest movement, or to

defend the authority itself, but to find an angle from which no-one has discussed these violent images and controversial issues in political playwriting: to establish a new political approach to these conflicting ideologies and try to imagine another non-nationalist identity that might sustain Taiwanese democracy. This angle is close to what Rancière describes as the concept of the ‘part of no part’ (Rancière 1995: 28). As Hannah Arendt (1951) argues when she discusses ‘the right to have rights’, when a nation-state grants its citizens human rights, they distinguish citizens from ‘human/people’. Therefore, people without citizenship cannot be counted as a part of the nation: slaves who cannot participate in politics, the proletariat who can work but have no fixed property; foreigners or immigrants without right of abode. These groups become the ‘part of no part’ (Arendt, 1951: Ch. 9, Rancière 1995: 34). Here is the reason for my disquiet regarding the Sunflower Movement, which claims to regain the sovereignty of the people and restore democracy, but sovereignty here is understood as a ‘National and/or Taiwanese sovereignty’ reserved only for those genuine ‘nationals/Taiwanese’: it excludes people with different opinions (including Chinese immigrants or those who are pro-Chinese) and restricts democracy in the name of restoring it. As Rancière indicates, ‘politics’ was born at the moment when the ‘part of no part’ could speak, participate in public affairs and therefore create one community that everyone belongs to. Politics transforms those who were originally invisible, making them visible; making those who were noisy, understandable. Therefore, it is a complicated state that cannot provide a single ideological answer for the new identity that the Taiwanese need. This is similar to Alain Badiou’s discussion of true ethics, which is to recognize the state of ‘multiple’: to expose the limits of the knowledge structure, thereby bringing out the truth that the knowledge structure cannot be thought, recognized, or named, in order to expose a new and more representative ideological subject (Rancière 1995: 52-53; Badiou, 2008: 70; Snyder,

2000: 36). I considered how to do this kind of script-writing, to explore an ambiguous identity which obviously exists but is not recognized; to build a community for a group full of traumatized memories to reconcile them with their past; to discuss how to seek change in a system that cannot be changed; and to think about how to really impact the audience in a late capitalist theatre. My research brought me to in-yer-face theatre, and I found the inspiration in one of the representative playwrights of this movement, Mark Ravenhill, and his dramaturgy, which I call 'Queer's Journey'.

Chapter 2: The Characteristics of Mark Ravenhill's Dramaturgy:

The Queer's Journey

2-1 On violence on stage

By the time of mid-1990s, the British theatre had seen a stunning new genre of plays with provocative violence on stage; at the premiere of Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, Jez Butterworth's *Mojo*, Joe Penhall's *Pale Horse*, Judy Upton's *Bruises* in 1995; and Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking*, Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *The Cripple of Inishmaan* as well as Kane's *Phaedra's Love* and Nick Grosso's *Sweetheart* in 1996. Critics competed to find the appropriate defining term to describe this dramatic force; and Aleks Sierz's *In-Yer-Face* became the representative definition of this new "Cool Britannia" era that redefined the subject matter, explored theatrical possibilities and pioneered a new aesthetic that changed the sensibility of British audiences. Sierz describes Mark Ravenhill and his contemporaries by stating in his book *In-Yer-Face Theatre British Drama Today* that:

One way of understanding the point of view of a young writer is to do a thought experiment. Imagine being born in 1970. You're nine years old when Margaret Thatcher comes to power; for the next eighteen years –just as you're growing up intellectually and emotionally– the only people you see in power in Britain are Tories. Nothing changes; politics stagnate. Then, sometime in the late eighties, you discover Ecstasy and dance culture. Sexually, you're less hung up about differences between gays and straights than your older brothers and sisters. You also realize that if you want to protest, or make music, shoot a film or put on an exhibition, you have to do it yourself. In 1989, the Berlin Wall falls and the old ideological certainties disappear into the dustbin of history.
(Sierz, 2001: 237)

As the background of '90s Britain is dominated by the Western ideologies of Capitalism and Libertarianism, therefore, when the 'in-yer-face' playwrights such as

Ravenhill addressed and criticized contemporary social, political or moral problems, in consequence they faced the difficulty of filling the void left by the disappearing old ideological certainties (as against the Soviet Union), just as Taiwanese theatres in the 1990s faced the disappearance of autocratic authority. They became essentially nihilistic or apolitical but also had an oppositional spirit (D'Montē and Saunders, 2008: 79; De Buck, 2009: 8; Sierz, 2001: 39). However, these new playwrights adapted to portray the crisis in the fractured, violent, dysfunctional capitalistic society by presenting the aspect of the most blatant, aggressive or emotionally dark images to achieve an unprecedented sharp criticism, drawn to the extremes of experience or taken to the limit of sensitivity to destroy the spectators' 'sense of safety' (Sierz, 2001: 6, 30; Monforte, 2007: 196). This particular 'in-yer-face' dramaturgy intentionally transgresses boundaries and challenges moral values: '[it] takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it [...] smashing taboos, mentioning the forbidden, creating discomfort' (Sierz, 2001: 4). These plays get used to "hit" the audience with intense emotional material (surprise, provoke or shock). Many of them use violence on stage to shock and cause instinctive reactions of nausea, revulsion, fear or anger. Expressing violence on stage becomes one of the most significant characteristics of the 'in-yer-face' generation interacting with its audience. As Sierz suggests, the virtue of in-yer-face theatre is to force the audience to realize '[t]he power of the irrational and the fragility of our sense of the world' (D'Montē and Saunders, 2008: 192; Sierz, 2001: 6).

However, the strategy of using violent scene as an exciting instrument and even cause discomfort to the audience, could be traced back to the representative English pioneer playwright and theorist in the 1960s: Edward Bond. Bond's dramaturgy of 'Aggro-effect' can be considered as the first theoretical methodology about writing on violence, and deeply influenced the writers of the in-yer-face generation (see

Nicholson, 2012; Sierz, 2001: 19). Mark Ravenhill once admitted in an article in the *Guardian* called 'Acid Tongue' (9th Sep. 2006) that Bond had a profound influence on himself, and also quoted a sentence that Sarah Kane told him: 'You can learn everything you need to know about playwriting, by studying *Saved*.' (See Ravenhill, 2006c). Bond was standing in front of a vacuum created by the unjust and self-interest capitalist structure of Britain in his time; the atmosphere of society was full of rigidified nothingness that leads to frustration and ultimately to violence in everyday life (Bond: 1977, 12). Youths are tied to work, and there is no room for class changes for most people, and Capital is firmly in the hands of a few people. Bond argues in his essay *On Violence* (1977) that the idea of unbearable violence is metaphorically represented in the face of structural oppression from an unfair society. He states:

[t]he causes of human violence can be easily summed up. It occurs in situations of injustice. It is caused not only by physical threats, but even more significantly by threats to human dignity. [...] Whenever there is serious and constant violence, that is a sign of the presence of some major social injustice.
(Bond, 1977: 13)

As he writes about the Victorian era in *Early Morning* (1968), at the pinnacle of British Empire and prosperity generated by industrialism and colonialism, ideas that still underpin contemporary political and economic institutions (Innes 2002: 163-4). Bond describes a society based on constant cannibalism, in which all achievement, power and even loving relationships consist of consuming other people to discuss how the country capitalized on social morality. This cannibalistic system symbolizes the unjustness of capitalism as it functions in modern British society: the upper classes exploit the under-class. Bond emphasizes this in the final scene of *Early Morning*, when everyone lives in a cannibal world and gains contentment by feeding on human

corpses together, which they call paradise; or socially called civilization. The individual does not matter in such a society dominated by consumerism and capitalism in Bond's plays, because the environment of this society dehumanizes people, who become callous and ruthless (Nicholson, 2012: 152).

Bond's characters are always determined by their own social, familial and economic relation to networks, which he deliberately articulates onstage; these people belong to a certain class that the social structure provides. Each of them has a special 'flavour and character' from a different political positions (Bigsby, 1981: 130; Manoliu, 2014: 363, 368). And in order to strengthen the sense of powerlessness and oppression of under-class characters, Bond often portrays the marginal, less-educated, young generation living disaffected and meaningless lives in the constructed urban world of consumerism; who are lacking any social or political principles, and ultimately committing unbearably cruel acts with no clear conscience or self-awareness (Innes 2002: 153). For example, in *The Pope's Wedding* (1962), Bond describes a bleak country landscape. The young working-class protagonist Scopey is facing a tragic truth after he won a cricket match and earned the love of the beautiful Pat, but 'nothing that followed would have such joyful physicality', which implies his future is pointless (Eyre, 2001: 253). The only thing attracting Scopey in the town is the mysterious hermit Alen; but when Scopey desperately realizes that Alen is not what he wishfully imagined (i.e. the pile of newspapers was not for "special work" but rather to stand on and peek out through the hole in the wall), it crushes him. This erupts in violent disillusionment as Scopey kills Alen and awkwardly takes his place and jacket. The banal social circumstances force Scopey to reject the plain and immutable rural life and go looking for the unknown, that impossible "*Pope's Wedding*" kind of life, but he fails. Bond demonstrates that capitalistic structure has limited his characters' ability to learn from experience in ways that would allow them

to take meaningful action but to behave abnormally insentient; he states: ‘the cause and solution of the problem of human violence lie not in our instincts but in our social relationships’ (Bond, 1977: 12).

Also, in *Saved* a young teenage mother drugs her baby and tries to attract its father’s attention; she is neglected and left alone with her fury, leaving the sleeping baby with a group of working-class youths. They want to tease the baby, but it does not respond as a dehumanized object; they first try to arouse it in kindly ways: singing, touching and patting but gradually transfers into violent pinching, beating, even burning with cigarettes and smeared it in its dirty diaper. Finally the situation loses control, and the gang stones the infant to death on stage. By this atrocious action of killing an innocent and vulnerable baby; which as a metaphor of the future of the society, Bond is pessimistically arguing the violence as the only method through which ordinary people living in a barren and futureless society are able to break out of the prison of depression. Bond set such a perspective to guide his audience to recognize those characters who are ‘on the brink’ of destruction, and if no one is going to intervene, the violence will be increasingly out of control. (Nicholson, 2012: 141; Bigsby, 1981: 131) Bond named this writing skill as ‘Aggro-effect’, which was a sort of shock therapy designed to compel his audiences through the experience of unexpected horror ordeals from the ruthless face of reality; and psychologically forcing the audiences to feel involved and responsible. Therefore, they will actively be searching for reasons or solutions in the rest of the play by themselves. (Innes, 2002: 169-70) In this dramaturgical design, by presenting his audiences with a gap or a void specifically in terms of social injustice, Bond often suggests a symbolic off stage reality that provides further allegoric contexts for the action occurring on stage. As he states: ‘No, I’ve never heard of a baby being stoned to death but I have heard of babies being bombed to death.’ (Cite from Nicholson, 2012: 139; Bigsby, 1981: 130;

Bond, 1978: 9) And for those audiences that were upset or angry for the baby in *Saved*, Bond indicates they should be more morally obligated to those real babies living in the battlefield.

Tom Milne describes the age of Bond's early creation the 60-70s as 'an age of violence'; Milne explains that everyday violence was increasingly visible in society, and this might be because, besides the terrible images from the Vietnam War, the whole of humanity were threatened by nuclear attack in the Cold War period: 'waiting for the big bang' (Milne, 1960: 14-20; Manoliu, 2014: 363, 368). Perhaps influenced by the times, Bond constantly developed different angles of violence which existed inside the reality; from the individuals trying to respond to a confined society as in *Pope's Wedding* or *Saved*; to a kingdom ruled by dehumanized capitalistic morality and degrading into cannibalism or chaos as in *Early Morning* or *Lear* (1971); to an allegorical dystopian, post-apocalyptic world after a nuclear attack as the *War Plays Trilogy* (1985) (see Innes, 2002). As a left-wing writer who was hoping to achieve a proletarian society, Bond holds the revolutionary belief in destructively renewing and rebuilding, and the method is "violence" itself, as Bond describes God's work in the *Old Testament*: 'To get rid of the violence, he killed his own son. It's just like using war to end another war' (Bond, 2001: 21). Bond argues that society or the process of liberating individuals from concreted social repression can't be fixed without demolition and replacement; on that account, instead of persuading people to behave rationally, Bond adopts a more radical position: 'Right-wing violence cannot be justified because it always serves irrationality; but left-wing violence is justified when it helps to create a more rational society.' (Bond, 1977: 14-17) However, Bond is also aware of the dilemma that the high risk generally comes out of violent behaviours (Innes, 2002: 158). For example, *The Bundle* (1978) begins with the discovery of an abandoned baby on a riverbank. The poet Basho refuses it, because he is searching for

enlightenment of greater good: ‘Why save one baby and let millions of babies starve?’ He leaves the baby to die and justified by a utopian outcome, in which the liberated peasants no longer reduce their children; however, the baby ultimately survives and seizes power, becoming a tyrannical ruler committing countless atrocities by the name of revolution (Eyre, 2001: 257). Here, Bond questioned the revolutionary approach of Basho, and tries to offer an ideological method of change; as he reveals the ironic simplest solution in his analysis: ‘In an ideal society [...] Basho would have picked that baby up, gone off the stage and there would have been no necessity for a play’ (as cited in Innes 2002: 156-158) Essentially, Bond believes the responsibility of political playwriting is to expose the imperfections and cruelty of the social nature to awaken the rationality and humanity of all the audience to make it better. As he notes in the introduction of *The Fool* (1976):

The gap [between our freedom and animal nature] is filled by culture. Human nature is in fact human culture. The degree of culture is measured by its rationality. Rationality is the basis for discriminating between good and bad cultures. As human nature is human culture, human nature is social.
(Bond, 1976: 72)

In his later plays, Bond adapts Brecht’s concept *Parables for the Theatre*, which sets out a particular model of the imaginary world, usually utopian or dystopian, in order to construct a parallel between the posited world and our own. There is a clear example in *The War Plays: Red Black and Ignorant* (1985), set in a post-nuclear world. The kind protagonist Monster ignores his son’s reluctance and helps a strange woman, who is also applying for a rare job interview, which indirectly causes his son to lose that opportunity. The son blames him and states: ‘The government rules by creating two classes of citizen. I am second class: I have no work. I cannot afford to

behave as if I were first class' (25). He ends up joining the army and becoming dehumanized into the war machine. By revealing this dehumanized feature of capitalism and social-class system, people cannot afford to be kind; Bond forces his audience to contemplate and to reflect on the possibility of transforming their habituated and accustomed ideologies to rebuild the system (Busby, 2013: 274). Scholar David Davis claims that Bond has 'found a form of theatre that can face the individual with his or her social responsibilities' (Davis: 2005: xvi), which is based on his faith in collective rational humanity: 'it is not a thing given to us, it is a relationship which create between other things as nature, society, economy, rationality, emotion, imagination, the search for justice' (as cited in Davis, 2005: 92). In order to prevent the real cruel things taking place in the reality, Bond invites those spectators consciously and spontaneously to reject docility by proposing and testing political solutions on stage that encourage them to take political responsibility for themselves and others off stage (Busby, 2013: 268). As in the final scene of *Saved* ends with young Len awkwardly mending a broken chair surrounded by silence and ignorance; but this silent stalemate suggests an incipient hope for their indifferent society, as Bond puts it in the preface to *Saved*: 'Clutching at straws is the only realistic thing to do'. Len is saved in the end: by improving a tiny thing it hints at redemption, which the others all have given up (Eyre, 2001: 253; Innes, 2002: 161). This positive ideology might seem optimistic: but believing in rationality seems the most practical way for Bond to look forward to an ideal socialist paradise.

However, in 1989, as Sierz describes, the fall of the Berlin Wall was a political watershed: left-wing ideology disintegrated with the Soviet Union. All the previously communist countries followed the tide to join the open market and collectively composed a sturdy global capitalistic system. (Sierz, 2012: 28-30). Most people embraced the new globalized spirit of Western democratic and libertarian ideology; in

Britain, Margaret Thatcher, the first female Prime Minister, constructed the dominant conservative economic hegemony for twelve years and influenced a whole generation (Şakiroglu, 2015: 134-136). Bond's expectations of the socialist proletariat victory were not fulfilled, and his ideology appears less applicable to contemporary urban life shaped by the more moderate but more hegemonic global capitalistic uniformity in the 1990s; Bond's social reform concept and revolutionary left-wing ideas, is no longer pleasing in the eyes of a new generation of middle-class audience (Urban, 2008: 39). However, Bond's criticism of equating capitalism with the cruelty of civilization, and similar concepts of his dramaturgy as 'Aggro-effect' were adopted by one of the in-ner-face generation, Mark Ravenhill.

Ravenhill continued the criticism of and reflection on the troubling aspects of unchecked dominated global capitalism after the 90s; in *Some Explicit Polaroids* (1999), Russian rent boy Victor has the following line: 'The world is not so big, you know? There's the same music, the same burgers, the same people. Everywhere in the world. You can keep moving all the time and still be in the same place' (303), which uncovers the globalised market power in the world; you can purchase any item anywhere because the same items are marketed all over the world (Wade, 2008: 287). In *Shopping and Fucking* (1996), Ravenhill created a representative businessman Brian with utilitarianist philosophy as a semi-villainous character but also a metaphorical saviour. Brian asks an epistemological question about how humanity has developed over time, and answers as follows: 'By war, by struggle, kill or be killed. And money – it's the same thing, you understand? The getting is cruel, is hard, but the having is civilization. Then we are civilized.' (87) Brian reveals the institutional truths of violence still underneath the external environment disguised as a modern civilized society. The end of Cold-War meant that the dominant violent images of apocalyptic nuclear war were temporarily dismissed; but the unbearable violence started to appear

in the domestic news as in the murder case of James Bulger (a three-year-old boy killed by two ten-year-old boys, and abandoned on the rail track) in 1993; which triggered Ravenhill to start his writing, as he describes the sense of this case as irrational, abnormal and excessive, and affects many of his early works which involved dead children; (Ravenhill, 2004). As Sierz notes the violence they are facing in the 90s, are more unreasonable and irrational: 'Violent acts are shocking because they break the rules of debate; they go beyond words and thus can get out of control. Violence feels primitive, irrational and destructive' (Sierz, 2001: 8-9). Therefore, the dependable rationality Bond once asks of his audience becomes less reliable in the post-modern age as this kind of abnormal crime emerged. In *Handbag* (1998), Ravenhill writes a scene clearly influenced by Bond's 'Aggro-effect' when a young junkie Phil and his low-paid nanny girlfriend Lorraine snatch a baby from her middle-class employers. Their dream of becoming a conventional partnership is merely an illusion, especially for Phil, as they are unable to take care of the fragile baby: in the panic of trying to solve the baby's breathing problems, Phil burns the baby with a lit cigarette until it dies. This act recalls the scene in which a baby is stoned to death in *Saved*. As playwright Caridad Svich states:

Everyone is culpable in *Handbag*. There are no moral victories to be won. [...] as in *Saved*, is the fact that the characters seem unable to take individual action. They are bound to a societal or emotional place that does not allow for moral action.
(Svich, 2003: 91)

Ravenhill preserves his characters with more judgmental and autonomous identity as at the end of his cruel actions. Phil sat numbly, confused, he muttered to himself: 'I did a bad thing' (226). The tragic fate of the baby is in the context of a world in which

the adults are too self-absorbed to attend to the baby's needs. This is different from how Bond characterizes those young gangs without consciousness and autonomy in *Saved* or his other works; as he blames this on the capitalistic social structure, which, in Marxist terms, transform those youths into "docile bodies" (Busby, 2013: 239); therefore, when those youths are finally released they will still show no change and no regret. As Ken Urban analyses (2006), in in-er-face theater at this time, cruelty as an aesthetic motif is not simply to frighten the audience, but to awaken them from the superficial, self-indulgent, capitalist world. Ravenhill is dealing with a more rigid power structure and complicated individual psychology; as in Phil's final reaction to his own behaviour, Ravenhill emphasises his awareness of the violent action as his own choice and suffers by guilty conscience; no matter good or bad, Phil is changed since then by his own action.

In many of his works, can be found the connections between Ravenhill adapts the strategy Bond used; as he intentionally focuses on depicting such characters that, just like Rancière's 'part of no part' discussed earlier, were the dross of their society; they are needy, greedy, wounded, and only briefly able to connect with the world around them. They cannot reflect on their condition and easily forget their suffering; and so seem that they are doomed to repeat their failures again and again. But Ravenhill further modified his own methods as to criticize the phenomenon of late capitalism, which conceives of every individual as a self-centred infant 'me', struggling to grow into an adult 'us'. In his dramaturgy, the accumulated consequences of people's choices are everything, and his characters need to take responsibility for their indulgent, apathetic or ignorant choices to achieve their subjectivities and to be aware their unconsciously subordinate political positions. Ravenhill describes his writing purpose as follows:

I'd like to think that the best bits of my writing have captured some of the weightless, soulless emptiness of contemporary global capitalism and in doing so opened up a space for some of the audience to think more critically about "The Way We Live Now" than they might have done before.

(Ravenhill, 2006a: 132)

Therefore, he portrays his characters as realistic urban drifters who are trapped in an emotional emptiness that 'points toward a deeper void in isolated lives that draw nothing from social, moral, or historical sources of meaning' (Kritzer, 2008: 39). Struggling in the meaningless loneliness, these figures seek pleasure in the most convenient way, as part of the commercial culture of takeaway food, huge chain-stores, drug consumption, sexual transactions; but those symbols of consumerism only paralyze their real sensitivity from their identities. Therefore, most of them finally indulge in the extreme sensory stimulation as self-mutilation or violently sexual abusing; to seek for the feeling as a living person (Klein, 2011: 222-223). Using the 'Aggro-effect' to connect to his audience is not just a matter of rude words or shocking scenes, but creating a feeling of 'nowness' to convey those disturbed ideas and a new sensibility, and get them involved. In other words, it is experiential, not speculative. Ravenhill states his purpose is firstly to engage the spectators:

I want audiences to make moral choices: to decide moment by moment – intellectually and emotionally – whether what the characters are doing and the choices they are making are right or wrong. I find this dramatic. It makes good theatre. (Ravenhill, 2004: 313)

This is different from Bond's educational pursuit of ideal politics; Ravenhill is revealing a more compromised but practical methodology to immerse the audience into the experience of a larger ideological question, which lack of clear moral or

political direction. The audience cannot express their compassion at a distance, but experience the same level of panic and confusion as those characters and further reinforce their intuition and judgment: ‘The permission to say, “This is wrong” – without qualification – takes us a step closer to “This is right” and to change’ (as cited in Alderson, 2010: 868).

Sierz argues that ‘in-er-face’ theatre at a time when the world seems increasingly fragmented and dislocated, as like Ravenhill recognizes that where any old ideological and moral certainties from Bond’s time had melted away, for good or bad; we are living in a late capitalist and liberal world. In this way, ‘In-your-face’ theatre compared with the 1970s and 1980s, when theatrical productions were often directed against the injustice or autocracy of the ‘bad’ ruling class (Sierz, 2001: 4-5). People are not the victims who are threatened by the catastrophic wars or distinguished only by the class-difference, but still trapped in an invisible prison of institutional bondage and discipline. Therefore, Ravenhill wants to force his audience to see something close up, about what humans are capable of when they have this kind of autonomy, and what excuses would they use to forgive themselves. As a response to the situation, Ravenhill developed a dramaturgy that focuses on marginal characters and descriptions of how they use to get by the overwhelming uncertainties. As in *Shopping and Fucking*, he has Robbie say: ‘I think we all need stories, we make up stories so that we can get by’ (66). Therefore, individual stories replace grand narratives. The absence of certainty and the proliferation of individual narratives of questionable authenticity contributes to an inevitable result as events or acts that end up wrong or getting cruel, which may rouse the audience to review corresponding social problems, individual responsibilities or their own obligations (Bathurst, 2005: 191; Sierz, 2001: 244). To this extent, I believe, is ultimately what I hope to achieve in current Taiwan’s gradually ossified and market-oriented theater. It urgently in need

of a new theatrical type combining fresh styles and unprecedented ways of viewing, to extend conventional codes of representation and increase the liminality of the theatrical experience (Defraeye, 2004: 81). For this part, I will use my play *Voting and Fucking* as an example in Chapter 4-2 to further discuss how to apply the ‘in-yer-face’ aesthetics in detailed comparison and contradistinction.

2-2 The ‘Queer’ identity of Ravenhill’s characters

There are four elements found in many of Ravenhill’s plays as a linear process, which I describe as ‘The Queer’s Journey’. The concept is adopted from Joseph Campbell’s classic template of ‘The Hero’s Journey’ (1949), referring to a character’s growth after a journey, returning home changed or transformed. The journey begins with some characters that cannot be defined in the capitalist society, as in Rancière’s ‘part of no part’, who are excluded from routine and norms. Even though many main characters in Ravenhill’s works appear as gay or lesbian, but he uses to separate each individual from a collective ideological community as a unique identity, morbid rather than wholesome, edgy rather than mainstream. They are all destined to be oppressed by capitalistic society and seek ways to struggle or escape from the collective marginalized experience. In the process, some of them choose extreme or incomprehensible means to ‘get by’, revealing their “traumatic past” that governs their actions. And when to go further to participate in the experiential violent acts to make the rebellious response, few of these people “witnesses of suffering”, and finally changing their living habits or attitudes and becoming “survivors”. Ravenhill expanded these kinds of contemporary marginalized identities to a broader category, and he called them “queers” (Sierz, 2001: 138).

The concept of ‘Queer theory’ was coined originally by Professor Teresa de Lauretis to serve as the title of a conference that she held at the University of California. She had heard the word ‘queer’ being tossed about in a gay-affirmative sense by activists, street kids, and members of the art world in New York during the late 1980s and paired that scurrilous term with the academic word ‘theory’ deliberately to be disruptive (Halperin, 2003: 339-340). As in the 1990s, the demands of the LGBT community included marriage equality, hoping to shift into ‘regimes of the normal’ through this (Brown, 2015: 11-16). The term ‘queer’ was adopted to

emphasize that identity is not single or fixed, and express dissatisfaction with social norms in general. As in the text of 'The Queer Nation Manifesto':

Being queer is not about a right to privacy: it is about the freedom to be public ... It is not about the mainstream profit-margins, patriotism, patriarchy or being assimilated ... Being queer is 'grass roots' because we know that everyone of us, every body, every cunt, every heart and ass and dick is a world of pleasure waiting to be explored. Everyone of us is a world of infinite possibilities.
(Anon. 1990)

They expand the definition of queer to a bigger category, including bisexuals, transvestites, transgender people and sadomasochists. This opens the imagination to redefine the meanings of femininity and masculinity (Warner, 1993: xxxi-vii, Wu, 2016: 129-130; Bi, 2011: 113). The concept of 'queerness' from the beginning was not a harmonious subject but a differentiated and heterogeneous collective group that embraces multiplicity and fluidity.

Therefore, the 'queerness' here I want to discuss in Ravenhill's plays is closer to an attribute, not merely an identity. As David Halperin elaborates: 'Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant... It is an identity without an essence. "Queer", then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative' (Halperin, 1995: 62). It is about the boundary between normal and abnormal, which as the marginal social position taken by many of Ravenhill's characters because relatively speaking, their presence simultaneously reminds us of a normal/central existence. In *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), queer theorist Sara Ahmed quotes French philosopher Jacques Derrida's explanation of social identification in modern society: every individual belongs to a community, and they should be different. But the community will force all of them to achieve the same

identity so as to be considered as a member; and this process will expel the different and strange units by the metaphysical 'Pure Violence' to equalize its members and create something 'impossible' or 'unpresentable' (Derrida, 1967: 17). Therefore, as Ahmed states in the book, "'Queerness' becomes a matter of how things appear, how they gather, how they perform, to create the edges of spaces and worlds' (Ahmed, 2006: 167). And those who remain outsiders on the edge of the world become 'queers' who have been eliminated violently from the political subjectivity. This implies that the "insiders" of any community might all hold the legitimate identity that the community offered, rather than what they were born with, and thus their autonomy has been taken away. Hence, Ahmed further argues that the importance of queerness is when the "insiders" encounter the "outsiders", by witnessing the reasons and differences of their forbidden behaviours. Just as Rancière argues, when the 'disagreement' is heard by society, it will create an effect, described by phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty as 'slip[ping] away', in which 'queerness' may re-orient the understanding or judgment of normative society to form new patterns and new ways of making sense; as the essential provocative quality of queerness is to be the discontent with any existing order (Ahmed, 2006: 171; Ji, 1997: 14).

Here, by further shaping the marginal queer identities in his dramaturgy, Ravenhill uses characters from the under-classes of urban society: drug addicts, rent boys, prostitutes and strippers; and portrays their unusual behaviour as taking drugs, sexual transactions, self-mutilation and even sexually abusing someone to death for money. These pieces represent snapshots of increasingly disconnected moments of the exalted capitalised models of this time when every moment can be packed into a transaction. It seems that people and society can easily adapt to or even acquiesce in the existence of this type of 'others'. So by emphasizing the existence of the different

‘queerness’ inside the constrained structure is mattered, Ravenhill reveals what the human behaviour that transgresses the boundaries of normality and embraces the abnormal sense of ‘deviants’ and ‘perverts’ can be. It creates more consciousness-raising and political thought about the problems and authenticities of the constructed nature of contemporary urban community (Chen, 2011:390; Svich, 2003: 82; Monforte, 2007: 205).

In British modern theatre history, there is another precursor worth mentioning for using the dramaturgy of perverted activity by presenting male-rape on stage as a different dimension of an aggressive ‘aggro-effect’ of extreme sexual abuse: Howard Brenton, in his notorious *The Romans in Britain* (1980), mixes violence and sex as a powerful political weapon to disturb his audience and deliberately chooses male-on-male rape to magnify the shock of the atrocity. The first half of the play takes place against a background of Britain at the time of Julius Caesar’s successful second invasion of the island in 54 BC. However, *The Romans in Britain* uses smaller acts of violence as substitutes for the essential cruelty of cultural invasion (Thomas, 2012: 143). Accordingly, Brenton uses the historical events of the Roman invasion as a criticism of modern British relations with Northern Ireland, and presents his anti-imperialist political ideology. By focusing the cruelty and inhumanity of warfare into a scene of male rape, Brenton portrays an intensive and provocative picture of extremely violent sexual violation: when three Roman soldiers encounter three unarmed Celts youths beside the Thames, the soldiers quickly kill two of them and capture the third boy, named Marban. While the first soldier goes off to swim, the second and third soldiers start to sexually abuse Marban. They use the Celt’s own knife to lacerate Marban’s shoulder and then make an incision on his buttocks. Brenton enhances the feeling of inhumanity when the soldier introduces these cuts as ‘funny little ways’ (34) to his friend, which he learned in Persia. Brenton then depicts

a more provocative act when the soldier penetrates Marban. The young victim suddenly begins to defecate out of pain and terror; when the soldier notices it, he loses his erection and blames it on Marban's hygiene. (36) When the soldier goes off to wash himself, the last soldier comes closer and tells Marban a story of how he joined the Roman army. This represents a final hope for Marban, who sees someone with whom he may be able to negotiate: he begs the last soldier in Latin for help. However, Brenton makes a desperate ending as this act amuses and sexually arouses the last soldier; he forces Marban to fellate him shamefully in front of the other two soldiers (Thomas, 2012: 146-8). The gravity of this series of events is profound and unbearable both to its victim and audience. This suffering breaks Marban's confidence as a man of the Celts. He recognizes that his identity has been polluted by "the filthy water of Roman ways" because the Romans have violated "the fitness of things"(48). The male rape in here represents an eccentric thing which cannot be understood and is unnatural in Celtic society, and being involved in this violation demonstrates to Marban the fact of the absolute destruction of his culture. Therefore, at the end of the play, Marban begs for a knife from his tribe. Before he commits suicide, he does not mourn the violation of his body or the loss of his parents in the invasion, but the loss of his culture, dignity and the proof as a Celt (Ponnuswami, 1998: 76-9; Thomas, 2012: 150).

The 'queer' part of the act, as Sigmund Freud explains in his 1930 treatise on violence *Civilization and Its Discontents* refers specifically to 'male rape':

Their neighbo[u]r is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their sexual aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him.

(as cited in Thomas, 2012: 11; Freud, *Civilization*, 68-9)

The disturbing fact of that is because both rapists and victims frequently understand themselves to be heterosexual; therefore, although it replicates the pleasurable erotic experiences of gay men, the rape is about violating and destroying another, rather than gaining sexual pleasure (Thomas, 2012: 25). To this extent, the 'male rape' Brenton uses here is that of an abnormal behaviour to provoke the rational boundary and indirectly impose the latent homophobic ideology of his audience in the 1980s caused by the AIDS epidemic; that the sexually pure Celts are violated by the perverted Romans as a metaphor for colonization, to concretize the hidden violence of politically erasing the native culture and nationhood which Brenton imagines happening in Northern Ireland at that time.

The main difference between Ravenhill and Brenton is that Brenton's characters behave in a queer way on purpose, as a way to humiliate their conqueror. For those Romans, they still own the heterosexual/orthodox identities which have been recognized as 'socially identified' and normal when they return home. However, when those sexual actions such as anal or oral sex take place in Ravenhill's plays, they belong to a group of sexually ambiguous characters; they were without faith, nihilistic marginal youths with the representative postmodern traits that 'there were no ready-made Utopias and no grand narrative schemes' (Billington 2007: 361). They are not like Marban who still holds his divine nationalist narrative of Celt culture, still holding faith. They are lost in a state where they cannot judge normality and abnormality anymore, and all they can rely on is the senses and stimulation. For example, the rent boy Gary in *Shopping and Fucking* obsesses about sadomasochistic sex as the only way to rescue him from unbearable unhappiness, as he says: 'This big sadness swelling like it's gonna burst. I'm sick and I'm never going to be well' (83).

This melancholia of queerness creates a special dual trait: Gary's intense self-pity is caused by the accumulation of destructive oppression but also gives him the power to proceed.

As mentioned before, Ravenhill depicts gay sexual acts or gay relationships in many of his plays, including *Shopping and Fucking*, *Faust is Dead* (1997), *Handbag* (1998), *Some Explicit Polaroids* (1999) and *Mother Clap's Molly House* (2001), but the sexual orientation of his characters is mostly obscure and oblique; it might because Ravenhill is putting this 'gayness' into an expanded category of 'queerness'. As according to Aleks Sierz in *In-yer-face Theatre: British Drama Today* (2001), Ravenhill is rejecting the word 'gay' and adopting the word 'queer', as the first playwright to ignore conventions and present his audiences with a concept of sexuality that is fluid and beyond convenient definitions. This is similar to gender theorist Judith Butler's discussion of 'gender [as] an identity tenuously constituted in time' (Butler, 1990: 140): Butler questioned the gender dichotomy ruled by patriarchy, which is a heterocenterist representational apparatus. The only possible way to walk freely between genders and not be constrained by a fixed heterosexual construction, is by recognizing that gender (or sexual orientation here) is a product of social construction, and see through the nature of its social performative effect. (Butler, 1993: 93-119; 1999: 7-26) Ravenhill is more attracted to the performing feature as 'being queer, a sexual outlaw' than 'being gay, in the sense of assimilation'. He criticises the general 'gay identity' in theatre as the 'agenda of much gay drama tries to prove that gay people are just like straight people but with better soft furnishing[s]', whereas 'the notion of queer is much more about being a radically different person' who doesn't feel the need to imitate other people (Sierz, 2001: 151; Bathurst, 2005: 214). Enric Monforte describes the conditions of Ravenhill's characters: 'Young characters are in a world that's without politics, without religion, without family,

without any kind of history, without structures or narratives, and as a consequence they have to build up their own structures' (Monforte 2007: 93). For Ravenhill, being queer means people making decisions on their own without socialized regulations or constraints. This stands for their intrinsic freedom and autonomy, but also they need to face the consequences of their decisions, which often lead to a more desperate outcome because of their incompetence or inability to bear responsibility.

Most queer characters in Ravenhill's plays are living without their original family, who might otherwise function as instruments of metaphorical heterosexual regulation, but rather in an imaginary world of hedonism with their partners. They seem unable to take functional actions or proper responsibility (Wallace, 2005: 273). Ravenhill is focused on depicting how those queers live in this age of post-capitalism, which people lose all options and must be capitalized or commercialized; therefore, for those poor and marginal characters there's nothing can be determined except themselves; it is most obvious in those characters in their adult roles: they seem to be confused adolescents and are more concerned with their own sexual or consumptive satisfaction, and live without political ambitions (Svich, 2003: 86). Michelene Wandor describes a more negative image of those queers in *Shopping and Fucking* as a general picture of Ravenhill's characters: 'No one is really able to look after themselves. The former involves theft and ownership, the latter, continuous physical, homosexual violation. At the centre are semi-homeless, parentless, unloved young people' (Wandor, 2001: 228; Biçer, 2012:116).

For example, Mark is presented as an unsuccessful father-figure for Robbie and Lulu in the play; he makes continuing attempts to kick his addiction to drugs, and is ultimately bewildered by the teenager lover Gary's erotic desire (Horan, 2012: 261). Another example is David in *Handbag*, who is going to have a baby with his partner Tom with the help of a lesbian couple, Mauretta and Suzanne. Mauretta, as the

pregnant mother, believes that having two mums and dads will make the child ‘doubly blessed’ because if one parent ‘decides to pack a bag and move out’ the child will have more than enough parents ‘to be going on with’ (3); in her imagination, they can do better than the traditional family. However, while she’s giving birth, Suzanne’s attentions have turned to Lorraine, a young woman she meets in work; and David leaves his partner Tom and his own baby behind and has an affair with a homeless drug addict (Phil). He tells him while they having sex: ‘My kid was born. I wasn’t there. Her mother was in another hostel. They never told me... I can’t even take care of myself. I can’t work it out’ (158). Family and parenthood are both conceptual basic ingredients of the heterosexual social structure; when Mark and David want to become someone’s ‘father’ figures in a family, they once believed that they can be better parents than heterosexual couples as they can create something better and positive, but they were overwhelmed by the economic demands or restricted freedom. They make choices for selfish reasons and buy into the notion we are individuals rather than part of something greater. Contemporary society renders all parents ineffectual and careless because they see their children as objects rather than offspring (Bathurst, 2005:201; Halberstam, 2005: 65; Ahmed, 2006: 177).

The burden of representing those sexualities of minorities in Ravenhill’s dramaturgy is then to shift the thematic concern from shame and guilt to ecstasy and from sexual repression to triumphant enlightenment. Those erotic desires imply a demand for a fully conscious queer subjectivity as a prerequisite to the membership of a culturally correct Queer community; at this point, queer finds itself defined against not just the heterosexual but the insufficiently queer too (Chen, 2011: 401). For example, in *Faust is Dead*, the rich-born Pete is so numbed to the world by the bland pleasures of consumerism that he is forced to cut his body to get any kind of physical reaction, and his willingness to have sex with gay Alain is only in an alienating way,

such as viewing himself being fellated through the lens of a video camera or fucked while on drugs. In *Shopping and Fucking*, there is a short sex scene between siblings Lulu and Robbie in an emergency room; this is incest when Lulu masturbates Robbie, to comfort him after the accidental attack. In another scene, in a shopping mall, Mark asks Gary to satisfy him orally in the fitting room. Although Gary argues, 'There's a security camera', Mark insists that it 'Doesn't matter' (55). Mark illustrates that gay sex is no longer a private business to be confined to the bedroom or a disgraceful act of abnormality; on the contrary, it has become a banal, everyday act without meaning (De Buck, 2009: 11-6).

Capitalism is sometimes presented as a benign force that allows sexual dissidence to flourish; as in *Mother Clap's Molly House* (2000), Mrs. Tull becomes the mother figure of the mollies and acting as confidante and matchmaker for them. She says: 'For that is the beauty of the business. It judges no one. ... A businesswoman will never judge – If your money is good' (54). This attracts a young homosexual, Tom, who is encouraged to come out in the openly sexual Molly House. He believes that here he can find someone like him (lacking masculinity) and finally be liberated. However, when he finds the house is governed by capitalistic consumerism and hedonism, Tom is forced to have oral sex with a stranger, recorded by another man, because in that house the act of oral sex between men is treated as a commodity that can easily be paid for. This act of violation hurts Tom, and he protests:

I was really looking forward to this evening. This is all I ever wanted. All the years stuck at home listening to me dad: Fucking poofs this, fucking queers that. And I thought: You're history, you. ... That's history. And I'm the future. This is the future. People doing what they want to do. People being who they want to be. So why...? Why do you have to make it

wrong?
(Ravenhill, 2008: 86-87)

Here, Ravenhill draws the audience's attention to the viewpoint of a feminine boy who cannot be accepted by his old-fashioned father, but also refuses to drift into the dominant consumerist stream. Ravenhill uses sexual acts as a field in which transactions are played out, asking his characters and audiences about how we give ourselves to someone else. What price do we pay for doing so? This is still a market-based transaction to maintain the capitalistic hegemony. The binary distinction here is between 'affordable' and 'unaffordable' (Bathurst, 2005: 209-210; Alderson, 2010: 866-867; Svich, 2003: 95).

When this 'queer identity' based on Ravenhill's portrayal of contemporary social conflicts with the dominant ideologies as enslaved to commerce; it can be seen in two distinct reactive attitudes of his characters. The first is the escapist and hedonistic lifestyle that leads characters to behave irresponsibly and with apathy to almost everything, including political activism. Some characters exist on a superficial level without a stable identity, absorbed in the trivia and frenzy of city life; Caridad Svich describes the younger generation in *Some Explicit Polaroids* as follows: 'Personal gratification and pleasure have usurped political idealism' (Svich, 2003: 90; Bathurst, 2005: 205). The youths in the play (Tim, Nadia and Victor) represent the inhabitants of the hedonistic world, reinforced by their consumption of junk food, pornography and other products of modern 'trash culture' (Wallace, 2005: 273). They deny their pervasive sense of emptiness through constructing a generational ecstasy (Klein, 2011: 232). However, this fantasy-like attitude seems fatuous and powerless when confronted with real obstacles such as domestic violence, HIV infection or losing an intimate partner (Sierz 2001: 146-7). For example, when Nick, a parolee who has

been imprisoned since 1984 for his political ideals, remarks on the bruise on Nadia because she has endured a violent boyfriend, Simon. Nick is trying to solve the problem, and makes her face the starting point of a new life. But Nadia can only laugh at his anger and emphasizes they are happy and at peace with themselves. Even when Nick points out that her wound is bleeding, Nadia answers: 'On the outside,' and Tim says, 'Yeah, you can't just look on the outside' (273).

This answer recalls when Nick first met Nadia and physically defended her from Simon. He blamed Simon as a man who likes to beat up women (252), and Nadia immediately defended Simon, calling him 'frightened' and a 'child inside' (23-4) (Thomas, 2008: 42). She makes excuses for him: 'He's doing the best he can with the knowledge that he has' (18). Nadia is convinced that she cannot abandon this suffering 'child', who had a difficult childhood and needs to be nourished and cared for (Klein, 2011: 233). In the later part of the play, Nadia reveals that she herself was actually a suffering child when she talks about her father: 'I've never met a paedophile. Well, only my father. But I don't count him' (27). This might also explain why she has left her family and uses her body to make a living as a lap dancer. Nadia is forced to be grown-up in appearance, but deep down her understanding is still that 'we're all children inside' (24). However, seeing the inside hasn't protected Nadia from getting hurt, as Simon cleverly abuses her naivety by parodying her empathy when asking for forgiveness: 'I'm really trying to work through this... control issue or whatever it is. [...] I want to understand why I have this need to hurt you' (20). Therefore, she gets hurt repeatedly, and more seriously.

Tim and Victor offer a contrary response to Nick's pragmatism: their response to Nadia's bruises is to go to a gay club and have fun, because, as Tim explains to Nick the young generations are all responsible for their own actions: 'We don't blame other people. That's very nineteen eighty-four' (39) (De Buck, 2009: 26). They have no

solution for the bruised and bleeding body except for the temporary happiness and eventual emptiness of a party. However, this escapist attitude fails when Nick leaves Nadia and she collapses emotionally for the first time. Again, they encourage her to join a party and while Victor puts makeup and wig on Nadia, Tim tries to cheer her up with a stereotyped pep talk: 'Nothing's a pattern unless you make it a pattern. Patterns are only there for people who see patterns, and people who see patterns repeat patterns. So we don't look for that. We see each day as a new day and we say "Hello new day"' (48). But this time, Nadia says: 'Hello new day. Hello me, hello Tim, hello Victor ... No I can't' (48). Ravenhill indicates that the ideology of a utopian 'Happy World' is easily invalidated when it confronts something meaningful.

This hedonistic attitude can also be introduced as Sierz describes the Polaroid of the young Victor's naked body: 'instantly gratifying but short lived images, worked as a powerful metaphor for nineties pop culture' (145). This photo of Victor's body has been posted across the world via the internet and results in Tim purchasing him from Russia (Bathurst, 2005: 204). Their relationship is not simply that of lovers, but of ownership or consumerism, as Tim states: 'I paid for you. I own you' to Victor, and treats him as a pet ('Sit, sit. (To Nick) You have to be firm with them') or a child ('Wait. Daddy's talking' (37)). Both are afraid of experiencing a 'real' engagement, rather than a queer relationship. Victor blurs the distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality in an erotic scene with Nadia: 'I like women. I'm not afraid of women. I can fuck women' (56). However, he behaves as if more obsessed with his own 'fantastic body', as we can see when Victor hints at his troubled childhood. He says: 'Many boyfriends. They go crazy for my body. But also my father, yes? My father and my brother go crazy for my body' (9). However this almost incest memory seems to be deliberately forgotten or distorted, but instead became a push for him to indulge in narcissistic self-worship and his dreams of one day becoming a huge porno

star (239).

On the other hand, Tim shows his apprehension of getting involved in a serious relationship: he is preoccupied by the terror of losing control and dying: ‘Suddenly I was nobody. When you’re “Person Who Is Dying” and they take that away from you then you’re “Person Who ...Blank, Blank, Blank”’ (67). Behind the hedonistic superficial, Tim even reverts to the values of the older generation in search of a stable grip on reality and desperately calling for an apocalyptic ending: ‘I want communists and apartheid. I want the finger on the nuclear trigger. I want the gay plague’ (58). He wants to run away from death, and rejects the antiretroviral drugs, choosing to die from the certainty of an AIDS-related illness rather than struggling in precarious circumstance. But only after Tim dies does Ravenhill reveal their true feelings for each other, showing that maintaining an emotional distance is insincere (De Buck, 2009: 27). As Caridad Svich argues: ‘Tim and his death serves as a locus of liberation and understanding among the characters’ (91). Indeed, Tim’s death incites the other characters to reflect upon their lifestyle and to bring about change. Grief-stricken Victor fails to cope with this painful truth and cries: ‘Fucking selfish fucking bastard. What about me? Make me suffer like this. This is not what you were supposed to do. Supposed to make me happy. Not make me suffer. I don’t want to feel this’ (65). He then hits the corpse and begs Tim to return his love: ‘Please say you love me. I don’t care whether it’s true or not. I don’t care whether you are lying to me. Please. I just want you to say it’ (66), showing an excessive level of dependence and a childlike need for comfort and support.

Victor is the child who refuses to grow up, demanding more and more from those around him without giving in return or thinking independently (Bathurst, 2005: 205). He only focuses on himself and neglects others’ suffering, but when someone he really cared for leaves him, he does not know how to react. Ravenhill then portrays a

queer fantasy scene in which Victor encounters the corpse of Tim asking for masturbation: 'Maybe I need you or I need someone. To stop me being alone. Alone with this. (Indicates his erection.) But don't confuse that with love' (68). The futility of this act emphasises the real feeling of loneliness under the mask of hedonism and Tim's principle of no loving commitments. While masturbating the corpse, Victor suddenly realises the "Happy World" in consumer culture is a lie (72), and he makes the decision to start a new "Happy Life" in Japan and leave this unbearable memory behind. Here, Ravenhill presents this hedonistic "queer identity" as worthless and ineffectual when confronted with reality. Younger characters choose to ignore or escape from real problems instead of solving them, and only look for things that can delight them, even briefly (Thomas, 2008: 44).

The other reactive attitude of queers in Ravenhill's dramaturgy is the masochism or self-mutilation latent in sexuality. As his characters obsessed with anal penetration with a knife (Gary in *Shopping and Fucking*), multiple serious self-cutting (Pete and Donny in *Faust is Dead*) or fatal piercing of the genitals (Tian in *Mother Clap's Molly House*). Ravenhill indicates a new kind of sensitivity as enjoying pain or the abusive titillation in the numbness of urban society; and pain is a subjective experience of sensation which cannot be shared or be calculated in numbers or measured by how much blood is sprayed, but only imagined by the others as audiences or witnesses. As Elaine Scarry discusses, 'physical pain – unlike any other state of consciousness – has no referential content. It is not of or for anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language' (Scarry, 1985:5; as cited in De Vos, 2012: 656-7). By presenting painful images, Ravenhill achieves the interaction of letting the audience imagine the worst pain, while recognising it as enjoyable for his 'queer' figures.

Gary in *Shopping and Fucking* is a good example, similar to Victor as a fourteen-

year-old rent boy and afraid of deep affection. Gary has experienced rape at the hands of his step-father when he was younger (Monforte, 2007: 203). However, in contrast to Marban in *The Romans*, Gary demands to be watched, owned and controlled by a stern father again. This is not Gary behaving as a kind of Stockholm-syndrome patient: he feels no attachment to or emotional dependence on the stepfather (the stern man in his sexual fantasies he describes as one who has 'got no face' (83). However, he talks about the abuse openly and tries to overcome this trauma by acting it out with the help of his new father-like lover Mark (De Buck, 2009: 14). Gary's obsession with this masochist character is clearer towards the end of the play, when he is not satisfied with blindfolded male rape and says:

It doesn't end like this [...] He's always got something. He gets me in the room, blindfolds me. But he doesn't fuck me. Well not him, not his dick. It's the knife. He fucks me – yeah – but with a knife. [...] Or, or a screwdriver. Or something. (84)

He demands a fatal act: this is also a wish to die (Thomas, 2012: 197). Mark desperately tries to change his mind, but Gary responds: 'I'm not after love. I want to be owned. I want someone to look after me. And I want him to fuck me. Really fuck me. [...] And, yeah, it'll hurt. But a good hurt' (56). His desire is for hurt which can bring back the real feeling again. This recalls the very beginning of his senseless attitude. Gary is fundamentally destroyed when he is abandoned by his biological father; as he says: 'I've got this unhappiness. This big sadness swelling like it's gonna burst. I'm sick and I will never be well. [...] I want it over. And there's only one ending' (41). This scene ends with Mark promising the boy: 'I take you away.' Ravenhill is intentionally ambiguous about whether or not Mark actually goes through with Gary's request to die. They disappear from the stage and the scene ends before

any further violence is enacted. Ravenhill reveals the suicidal scenario at the end of this play as more than a simple sexual fantasy, but one caused by the trauma of having experienced repeated sexual violation and abandonment (Thomas, 2012: 198).

Nadia and Victor's hedonistic attitudes are also based on a problematic childhood; in Ravenhill's dramaturgy, the significance of presenting these particular 'queer' attitudes is not to offer judgment or criticism, but to build the contexts of each individual being aware of their own identities and how they differ from the dominant identification of the society they live in. This firstly deconstructs individuals in relation to their social orders, and reveals the difficulties and obstructions that occur when their queerness encounters reality. In the dominant capitalistic ideology of the 1990s, people lost faith in the pre-existing 'Grand narrative' and embraced Capitalism, as postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard describes:

Money has become a pure artefact, an artefact of a celestial movement, of a momentary exchangeability. Money has finally found its proper place, one far more unusual than in the stock exchange: the earth orbit, in which it rises and falls like an artificial sun.

(Baudrillard, 1989: 32-33; as cited in Biçer, 2012: 119)

Aleks Sierz emphasizes an important feature in *In-yer-face Theatre: British Drama Today* about most characters in Ravenhill's plays: they are considered as symbols of neglect, abuse and urban drift from the capitalistic system (Sierz, 2001: 131), and Ravenhill makes those traumatized queers feel lost in capitalised modernity, nostalgic for the grand narratives (see Ravenhill, 2008b). No matter what kind of trouble or difficulty they are facing, Sierz emphasizes it would be wrong to see them as simply victims: 'They are quite tough and optimistic, they keep trying out new schemes, they don't moan' (Sierz, 2001: 130). For example, Robbie and Lulu try many ways to pay

their debts; Victor and Nadia do everything to encourage Tim to take the anti-HIV medicine; in a way, ‘they don’t call on the government to sort out their lives; they don’t say they should get more unemployment benefit; they don’t have a political vocabulary’ (Sierz, 2001: 130). Willing or not, they are living on their own efforts and refuse to be identified as part of the existing political system. This “queer identity” Ravenhill uses provides a particular dialectical comparison to present a more complex and detailed observation: their sufferings become their own choice because that is the only thing they can control. The sexual deviation in here is not the actual point but to indicate the cultural and political ‘differences’ configured by the boundary between normal and abnormal; and we can only identify ourselves by revealing what we really are, which is our true identity even it is different from the normal majority.

This process (a view of identity as difference) is further expanded definition of queer/normal through the relation to the ‘Other’, to what is not, or through the relation to what it lacks, to comprehensively understand individual subjectivity (Laclau, 1990; Roberts, 2009: 178). This is relevant to Slavoy Žižek’s ideas about the “excluded” in global capitalism as the ‘inhuman ethics’ and ‘asserting the inhuman’, using this as a psychological analysis to face directly the inhuman core of humanity. Žižek criticizes humanism as having used a “human” mask to cover the inner abyss of humanity for a long time, which is ugly, distorted or even faceless (Žižek, 2008a: 165-166). Taking refugees as an example, Zygmunt Bauman questions whether the humanitarian rescuer might be a device designed to dispel anxiety in other parts of the world, relieve guilt, soothe conscience and ease the urgency of the situation. The establishment of a centralized refugee camp is also to isolate the refugees (Bauman, 2004: 77-78). The Western world often deprives third-world countries of their human rights, and then replaces them with a moral attitude to exercise their rights, under the name of ‘protection’, thus justifying previous persecution. Thus, they cause refugees

to lose their human rights and then rescue those same refugees. The perpetrator and the rescuer are the same group of colluding structures. Human rights have always been in the hands of the Western world, and never belong to the oppressed. This expanded definition of queer can also be seen in Taiwan's particular situation, with Taiwan in a fundamentally queer relationship to both China and the US: the KMT regime was supported by the US, but also forced to accept the principle of the One China policy. The choice for the Taiwanese identity is whether we should liberate our 'queerness' and accept the unpleasant consequences of declaring independence, or to be 'normalized' by the judgment of the UN and accepted as 'Chinese Taipei' or a province of China. Or do we still have other choices?

The queer identity Ravenhill adopted here might provide us with a new perspective. It allowed us to see the inseparability of ourselves and others. Then, through an understanding of others, realize the problem of the society which we believe to be normal. 'Queerness' forces us to recognize an area beyond our cognitive range; therefore, we are no longer to 'allow' queers to exist, but accept them as part of our own. Ravenhill reminds his audience that 'Queerness' exists by putting them face-to-face with queers, experiencing that those queer bodies are unable to conform to social mainstream norms, becoming disorientated. This inspires us to generate a multiple interpretation framework with multiple perspectives to reexamine our society and ourselves. In order to do so, we must build a deeper understanding of the logic and reasons behind 'normal' behaviours. This is the next step of the 'Queer's Journey', to reveal the traumatic pasts of troubled characters.

2-3 The traumatic past

Many of Ravenhill's queer figures seem damaged by their early memories of being abandoned or betrayed by someone close to them. These are often father-figures, which are absent in his plays and their place has been taken by an abusive stepdad: Gary in *Shopping and Fucking* was sexually abused by his stepfather, also Robbie and Lulu were abandoned by their biological parents in the supermarket. In *Faust is Dead* (1997), privileged Pete is numbed to the consumerist world built by his entrepreneur father, and obsessed with cutting himself to get some kind of physical reaction. Donny, on the other hand, was sent away from his mother when she developed cancer, and cuts himself to hear answers from Jesus. These traumatic experiences force these characters to face the overwhelming, ruthless and capitalist world alone and helpless. As Sierz analyses (2008), this is symbolic of a missing paternalistic state in the post-Thatcher era. The Welfare State no longer looks after its citizens. These orphan-like queers are unwanted by society; therefore, they can only adopt each other and create a new family. Mark adopts and takes care of Robbie and Lulu; the anarchistic philosopher Alain accepts Pete's invitation to elope together; the odd concubine-like relationship between members of the trash-culture Nadia, Tim and Victor in *Some Explicit Polaroids*; and in *Handbag* (1998) Lorraine conceals the baby that she is babysitting and sets up home with her boyfriend Phil. However, Michael Billington analyses these characters' mental states as 'all infantilized' and 'completely self-centred persons', selfishly aspiring with no concern for the means (as cited in Sierz, 2000: 142). Therefore, such temporary family-like combinations often collapse in the face of tests or external pressure. The ways they chose to face difficulties are either unreasonable, violent, self-destructive or fanciful. Here, I will cite trauma theory to analysis the cause of their abnormal choices and further discuss the reasons for Ravenhill's dramatic design.

Sigmund Freud (1895) discusses that hysteria is present in those who want to suppress intense and painful experiences. He believes that the human mind has a protective shield like skin, which when pierced leads to trauma, leaving traces on the individual's subconscious and making the defense mechanism more intense and extreme. Freud argues that the most profound impact of trauma is often not at the moment of its occurrence (as Lyotard called it, 'shock without affect'), but a deferred action that may be triggered by a later event (Lyotard describes this as 'affect without shock') (Freud, 1895: 353-356; Sears, 2013: 3; Lyotard, 1990: 15). Trauma theorist Cathy Caruth explains:

trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on. The person who has experienced this event is psychically incapable of "binding" that event or allowing that event to become a part of his or her subjectivity. Because of this, the person, often without being aware that he or she is doing this, re-enacts the traumatic event in different ways as a way of attempting to assimilate the event. (in Thomas, 2012: 196)

A traumatic experience can damage a person's internal memory structure to develop a structure of fear, affecting interactions with others. The individual loses confidence in predicting the external world. The individual will automatically recall the fear of others' strengths and fall into a state of delusion. With the great anxiety that follows, the individual fears impending death and personal destruction. They may attempt to overcome this anxiety by 'normalizing' the trauma experience by repeating the sensations brought about by the trauma (Bernet, 2000: 163).

This is very close to what Gary does in *Shopping and Fucking*: Gary was sexually abused by his stepfather many times. When he tried to tell Mark about his

stepfather's brutality, he says:

This bloke, my mum's bloke... [. . .] I tried to fight him off, but I think he gets off on that. [. . .] Whatever, you lie back, you fight, he still... I started to bleed. [. . .] He comes into my room after *News at Ten*... every night after *News at Ten* and it's, son. Come here, son. I fucking hate that, 'cos I'm not his son. [. . .] But I thought... now... I... got... away. (32)

These lines show Gary hesitating and failing to speak clearly about what actually happened. His memory seems confused and blurry and he cannot recall the aggressor's name or appearance. But the abuse inflicted serious physical damage to Gary's body, and he bleeds chronically from his rectum. This traumatic corporality and traumatized memory drives Gary in the penultimate scene to ask Robbie and Mark to help him with his fatal anal penetration fantasy. During the violence, Gary is still obsessed with enacting a 'stern father' to look after him, echoing the fact he was abandoned by his biological father. Finally, he abandons Mark, because compared to the love provided by the 'objective other', Gary believes being possessed will bring him more pleasure. Another part of the scene links to this: when Gary tells Mark about his experience of asking help from a social worker. He recalls:

I said to her, look, it's simple: he's fucking me. / Once, twice, three times a week he comes into my room. He's a big man. He holds me down and he fucks me. How long? She says. About two years, I say. I say he moved in then six months later it starts. I told her and she says: 'Does he use a condom?' (40)

The voice of the social worker is insensitive, ignorant and ineffectual. Gary continues: 'I tell her he's fucking me – without a condom – and she says to me – you know what she says? [...] 'I think I've got a leaflet. Would you like to give him a leaflet?' The

social worker stands for government power, which has no idea how to handle this young man or what remedies to offer him. Gary describes a kind of ‘panic in her eyes’ as she says to him ‘What do you want me to do?’(41) It is the bureaucracy that provokes rage in Gary as he walks away from the social worker and survives outside political protection as a prostitute. The entire bureaucratic system is deliberately designed to fail the real-world problems with which Gary presents it, to let him suffer (Thomas, 2012: 195; De Buck, 2009: 15). At the end of the play, the society in which Gary lives is able both to justify his violent death and to make his suicidal wish look like his own (abnormal choice): an option for which he shopped in a supermarket filled with alternatives. However, Gary’s desire to die is not a choice: he is not presented with any other options by the social worker who looks at him in terror and offers him a leaflet as a way to stop his rapist. This dysfunctional family and social system create the world in which suicide is the only option left for Gary (Thomas, 2012: 199). In depicting the struggles of his queer characters, Ravenhill draws a critical sketch of British social structure in the 1990s: it was ‘a bleak place where families were dysfunctional, individuals rootless and relationships acutely problematic’ (in De Buck, 2009: 63).

Therefore, this traumatized past of individuals in Ravenhill’s dramaturgy is opposed to the dominant postmodern cultural and conceptual ideology: as postmodern philosopher Jean-François Lyotard states, losing the ‘Grand narrative’ (Lyotard, 1984: 37; as cited in Biçer, 2012:115). In the manifesto speech in *Shopping and Fucking*, Robbie yearns for big stories to connect each person with a more meaningful past, supporting them to live in a more chaotic reality (Karadağ, 2013: 68). Robbie says:

I think we all need stories. We make up stories so that we can get by. And
I think a long time ago there were big stories. Stories so big you could

live your whole life in them. *The Powerful Hands of the Gods and Fate. The Journey to Enlightenment. The March of Socialism.* But they all died or the world grew up or grew senile or forgot them, so now we're all making up our own stories. *Little stories.* But we've each got one. (19)

Horan Thomas explains that Lyotard's ideas of the 'grand narrative' as large stories of progress, faith or metaphysics that give life meaning are no more real than the story of the classical Golden Age or the Garden of Eden; it is a symptom of wishful thinking and veneration of the past (Horan, 2012: 253-4). This proto-typical mythical "Grand narrative" maintains the stability and classification of ancestral society. However, as Lyotard argues clearly, "the grand narrative has lost its credibility" in postmodern society, (Lyotard, 1984:37, as cited in Biçer 2012:115), implying that fewer and fewer people believed in the myth or religion accompanying social evolution, until suddenly it comes to an end: the story is over and God is dead.

Jozef De Vos states: 'With the abandonment of God, man has killed a quintessential part of himself', and he describes the consequences: 'The characters are hopelessly adrift in a world that has abandoned its grand narratives' (De Vos, 2012: 658). At this point, the traumatic experiences in the 'Queer's Journey' can be re-interpreted, from being abandoned or betrayed by one's own family to a larger discourse in postmodernism, as Žižek and Malabou describe in terms of how the traumatized subject becomes the constitutive roots of subjectivity. Žižek takes the survivors of Nazi concentration camps as an example, arguing that the traumatized person was able to survive because destruction stripped him of his personal experiences and feelings, making him enter his own 'lack of being'. However, Žižek states this traumatized subject is not different from us, as we all confront our 'lack of being'. He calls this the 'post-traumatic disengaged subject': of refugees, victims of terrorist attacks, survivors of natural disasters or domestic violence (Žižek, 2006: 160;

2010: 294; 1991: 221-222). In such people, we witness a 'pure form of destruction'. They cut off the connection with the identity of the past and reveal the prototype of our existence for observers. Catherine Malabou indicates (2012) that she refutes Freud's statement and believes that contemporary traumatic experiences have nothing to do with preexisting sexual history or unconscious guilt. She argues that today's trauma is a pure 'eventuality' and 'absence of sense' (Malabou, 2012b: 8); we have entered a new era of political violence, in which politics is defined as something we 'don't expect to give violence a political meaning'. An obvious example of this kind of violence is terrorist attacks. The distinction between accident and crime, catastrophic accident and war gradually disappears. At the same time, no responsible institution or principle can be found, which means the 'natural catastrophe of contemporary politics' happens every day (Malabou, 2012b: 155, 213). In this way, Malabou stops us from looking for causation in trauma theory; instead, she focuses on the consequences of those shocks, to make us more aware of the true nature of society. In this 'Queer's Journey', we learned not only the traumatic experience might easily destroy people's identity, but also what happens to others may happen to us at any time.

As Ravenhill explains of those characters in *Shopping and Fucking*: '[t]he people in the play is just trying to make sense of a world without religion or ideology' (as cited in Sierz, 2000: 130). However, the lack of a reliable ideology and a universal set of values explain why making choices is perceived as incredibly difficult in Ravenhill's plays. There is a moment when Robbie, who works in a fast-food store, asks a customer if he prefers a hamburger with or without cheese. The man is not able to choose, and attacks Robbie with a plastic fork. Similarly, when Lulu is inside the Seven-Eleven choosing a bar of chocolate, she is overwhelmed by the shelves of commodities. She says: 'There's so much choice. Too much. Which I think they do

deliberately' (26). Choosing (and choosing well) is an impossible mission for characters who seem to lack any sense of history and barely mention anything outside contemporary popular culture (De Buck, 2009: 19; Rebellato, 1998: xix). Even though they are desperately trying to find a different set of values in the play, with its rapid, cinematic structure and nervous dialogues, they can't (Biçer, 2012: 120; Wandor, 2001: 237). As Ravenhill describes in the article *Me My iBook, and Writing in America* (2006), 'the characters tend to have a nostalgic hankering for a time when there was a stern father figure looking over them, a time when we weren't expected to make so many choices for ourselves' (2006a: 136). All they can do is to create little stories, mostly related to their traumatic experiences, reflecting '90s urban culture dominated by capitalism and consumerism.

As the representative of capitalism, Brian in *Shopping and Fucking* finally answers Robbie's yearning for something to believe:

Like a memory, you know, memory of what we've lost. [...] You feel it like – like something you knew. Something so beautiful that you've lost but you'd forgotten that you've lost it. [...] Because once it was paradise, you see? And you could hear it – heaven singing in your eyes. But we sinned, and God took it away [...] but sometimes you get a sort of glimpse – music or a poem – and it reminds you of what it was like before all the sin. (46)

Then he ruthlessly illustrates urban capitalistic society: "Get the money first" is the first line in the new bible. At the end, he inexplicably gives the money back to Robbie and Lulu as a reward for those queers whose only motivational force has been their instinct for survival, and who have finally learnt the importance of money as decent "civilized citizens". Here, capitalism is transformed into the most radical religion of the era. God not only did not die, but was transformed into money (Horan, 2012: 259;

Bathurst, 2005:187).

The '90s political and cultural background of Ravenhill's plays began with the collapse of Eastern European Communism; the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 symbolized the end of Cold War and the time of democracy and capitalism is coming (see Knapp, 2002; Wallace, 2005; Monforte, 2007; Sierz, 2012). On the other hand, Margaret Thatcher was elected as the Prime Minister and led the dominant capitalistic system for twelve years. As Ravenhill describes in an interview with Enric Monforte, Thatcher caused the country to move from a mixed economy and an anachronistic consensus about politics as a form of state capitalism, to a free market economy, very aggressively and quickly (see Monforte, 2007a). The whole fabric of the country was significantly transformed and headed to embrace the overwhelming globalized spirit of Western democratic and libertarianism ideology, which is highly integrated with the global capitalism (Şakiroglu, 2015: 134-36; Monforte, 2007: 95), everyone is born to be commercialized. Here I would like to apply the intensive criticism made by Edward Bond of the process of dehumanization by the capitalistic urban structure (Innes 2002: 153): Bond describes the majority of people living under capitalism as controlled by "inhuman institutions" whose task is to systematically destroy them. He argues people should know they are not born to work in a factory day after day as tools or machines, but that is how the ruling classes of capitalized society want its people to behave. So, when he explains the extremely violent behaviour of his characters, Bond suggested: 'If you take a dog and you chain it up from the moment it is born, the dog will become vicious. Now this is in fact what we do with human beings' (Gambit, 1970: 5-38; as cited in Nicholson, 2012: 138).

However, Bond's ideal left-wing ideology was obstructed by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, many former Communist countries joining the open market, and the corrective 'New Labour' policies adopted by the new PM Tony Blair; implying the

facts Sierz describing in *Modern British playwriting: the 1990s* (2012): ‘The Western world received a more post-industrialism phase, and there were less class differences and the intention of using revolution to subvert the structure of society was not a practicable way anymore’ (31). Therefore, the number of radical political plays called for revolution written by Bond diminished during the ’90s, and he started to work on educational plays for a younger generation (see Manoliu, 2014). Bond published *The Hidden Plot: Notes on Theatre and the State* (2000), describes his pessimism regarding post-modern society, closely related to Lyotard’s idea of losing the “Grand narrative”:

We begin to lose our humanity. The affluent utopia becomes a prison. In earlier time stories of gods and demons related their people to their world in a more human way than our supermarkets and machines relate us to ours [...] The economy grows, the means of material well-being and happiness increase – yet socially we are sicker. Our affluence is a higher form of poverty. In the past the story searched for truth, now we search for lies. And so our angst will turn into terror and escapades of sickening communal violence [...] Western democracy has become a secret Culture of Death. Instead of speaking human language we chant alchemical spells and arm our magic with terrors of gigantesque technology [...] What has been called the *End of History* is really the vanishing of the Future. Post-modernism means that we have begun to live in the past. The roaring of our media is like the sound of dinosaurs. Every species before it becomes extinct enters into a space of post-modernism [...] We are armed with weapons so powerful that peace brings us the dangers of war, our media tells us of distant disasters to distract us from dealing with our own, our democracy cannot define freedom for us, our politicians do not understand what they are doing, our children walk away from us. (Bond, 2000: 4)

Ravenhill also criticises capitalist society, but offers different explanations in a more complicated political context. As he describes in his article ‘Acid Tongue’, Thatcher

created, ‘a general sense on the British theatrical left that now was the time to “Get real” – to oppose the Thatcher regime with more directly relevant drama than the parables of injustice in which Bond seemed to be dealing’ (Ravenhill, 2006c). In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Victor, the former Russian from a communist regime, relates to others through a narcissistic desire for the perfect body. A complex family relationship is implied: ‘Many boyfriends. They go crazy for my body. But also my father, yes? My father and my brother all crazy for my body’ (9). His polaroids have been posted across the world via the internet as a commodity, downloaded by Tim as his sex slave (Ravenhill, 2001: 283; Bathurst, 2005: 204). He embraces the capitalist lifestyle because for him both capitalism and socialism are meaningless lies. Victor tells (left-wing) Nick: ‘I hate socialists’ and he comments:

Everything falling to pieces. The buildings ugly and falling down. The shops ugly, empty, the ugly people following the rules and then mocking and complaining when they think that no-one is listening. All the time you know it is rotting, but all the time. ‘Everything is getting better. Everything is for the best. The people are marching forward to the beat of history.’ This lie. This deception. This progress. Big fucking lie.
(270-271)

The modern dream of progress is decried by Victor: ‘Everything falling to pieces’ is metaphorically connected to the falling of the Berlin Wall but these lines also reveal the lost ideology of Victor: nothing could be believed and there is no meaning to life. And he behaves as a child who refuses to grow up, demanding more and more from those around him without giving anything in return. It is as if he knows that everyone would fall in love with his body, but he was still destined to be alone.

Compared with the idealess younger generation in the play, Ravenhill shows us an encounter between Nick and Jonathan later in the play. Nick has just been released

from prison for assaulting Jonathan fifteen years earlier as punishment for a radical left-wing protest. Ravenhill states that there is nostalgia for the opponents of socialism and capitalism they once identified with, when they believed in something bigger and nobler (Klein, 2011: 234). Caridad Svich indicates that the theme of *Some Explicit Polaroids* is “mourning for socialism’s values”, as Nadia and her friends introduce Nick to the new world of postmodern trash culture, consumption and self-indulgent: their celebration of the inauthentic, the kitsch and the frivolous clashes with his outdated values and politics (Svich, 2003: 90; Wallace, 2005: 273). Nick’s socialist fury makes him unable to see clearly behind these twentysomethings’ logic of living free: they are also lost and confused. He fails to notice Nadia’s bruises covered with make-up, and eventually he fails to help any of them (Klein, 2011: 233). Sierz remarks on Nick’s anger, which echoes both the *Angry Young Men* of the fifties and the left-wing revolutionary group Angry Brigade urban terrorists of the early seventies. Nick kidnaps and tortures Jonathan in 1984, a year that recalls both George Orwell’s dystopia and the last Miners’ Strike led by the NUM (National Union of Mineworkers) (Sierz, 2000: 146). Tim judges Nick and his (older) generation:

I look at people who were around in 1984. And I see bitter people. I think you must have spent so much time being angry that it’s left you all hard and bitter, and now there’s no way for you to deal with today. (41)

This ‘hardness’ does indeed make Nick disoriented when he returns to the capitalistic world, as Jonathan states how he got richer and richer:

You embrace the chaos [...] you see the beauty of [...] the way money flows, the way it moves around the world faster and faster. Every second a new opportunity, every second a new disaster. The endless beginnings, the infinite endings. And each of us swept along by the great tides and

winds of the markets. (293)

Even Jonathan shows a nostalgia for the days of the Cold War, summing up a sense of uncertainty or confusion. He quickly returns to global capital supremacy:

I think we both miss the struggle. It's all been rather easy for me these last few years. And I start to feel guilty if things come too easily. But really money, capitalism if you like, is the closest we've come to the way that people actually live. *And, sure, we can work out all sorts of other schemes, try and plan to make everything better.* But ultimately the market is the only thing sensitive enough, flexible enough to actually respond to the way we tick. (311)

However, there is another character in *Some Explicit Polaroids* that stands for the people from 1984 who were overwhelmed by capitalism: Helen, Nick's ex-girlfriend and comrade, who is hostile when she meets him again. She ironically mocks their former actions: 'So, what you going to do to me? Firebomb through the letterbox? Picket the entry phone. Or maybe you're going to kidnap me and do all sorts of terrible things to me?' (2). When Nick dismisses her work, she fights back: 'I don't need you Nick. I've got nothing in common with you. I've cut bits out of myself. Bit by bit, another belief, another dream. I've cut them all out. I'm changed. I've grown up. I'm scarred' (51–52). While Jonathan is scarred physically by Nick's violence, and Nick is physically isolated, Helen is scarred emotionally by the loss of her socialist ideology (De Buck, 2009: 37). She has compromised, working hard on improving the local bus services because 'the only way to get to the shop is a bus' (7). However, Helen's story about her mother reveals the danger of the society she lives in:

My mum. Living up here. Half the time the lift doesn't work. Which in some ways is a blessing. They stink of piss and there's needles on the

floor. So she takes the stairs. Seventy-five and she's climbing fifteen flights of stairs. You don't know who's there. Muggers. Dealers. You take your life in your hands. Year before she died she was mugged three times. That finished her off. (50–51)

Her fear of the collapse of safety in society also implies that she has doubts about her compromise:

Everything gone. Not all at once. Not some great explosion. Not one day you can see what's happening and fight back. But so gradually you don't see it. Long, dull pain. Every now and then thinking: "How did we get from there to here? How did we let this happen? It can't get any worse." But it does. On and on. (51)

Trauma in Ravenhill's dramaturgy metaphysically implies a transforming experience of modern culture. Not only does he depict horrible events in the characters' past, he reveals the context, showing the relationship between individuals, culture, politics and society. As Bond describes in *Hidden Plot*, this is a post-modern age; and as sociologist Francis Fukuyama proclaims in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democratic capitalism as the final form of human government is "*the End of History*" (see Hutton, 2014; Wade, 1999). Most of Ravenhill's characters are abandoned as kids and have to discover ways to live as they go along. They are forced to choose running away into hedonism, as in *Some Explicit Polaroids* or becoming apolitical and refusing to connect with others, as in *Shopping and Fucking*. Their past trauma builds up their queerness or lack of response to what goes on around them. However, this is different from Bond's political ambitions calling for a glorious socialist revolution, or Brenton's pessimistic attitude toward the suicidal Celts culture: Ravenhill's characters are still trying to survive in a dystopian

and brutal world, but are focused on their own nightmares from the past.

In order to even temporarily escape from the cage of memory, Ravenhill's characters need something to provoke them out of apathy (Karadağ, 2013: 19). For example, in *Faust is Dead* (1997), the post-modern philosopher Alain prophesies that good and evil have virtually merged in their time and there is nothing real because everything is governed by simulacra. Alain exclaims:

And how will we live in this new age of chaos? Not as we lived in the old age. Not with the old language. Not by being more kind, more... enlightened. We must be cruel, we must follow our desires and be cruel to others, yes, but also we must be cruel to ourselves. We must embrace suffering, we must embrace cruelty. (24)

Here, Alain suggests 'cruelty' as a way of stopping the virtualisation of reality in the capitalist world, with its endless image-building, hollow signifiers and icons for advertising (De Vos, 2012: 656). The two young characters in the play, Pete and Donny, are both obsessed with self-mutilation and addicted to the internet. They try to hide their emotions and express themselves through bodily violence. (Klein, 2005: 157-69) They meet on the internet and decide to have a kind of competition. What Pete doesn't realise is that Donny has become disillusioned with virtual contact and his indulgence in self-mutilation, and is struggling to answer many questions: why he was sent away from his mother; why he had to leave school; why his mother had cancer; or why he cuts himself. He believes that Jesus would be able to explain things to him because 'Jesus had a few cuts too by the end' and he reckons 'he understands why I do this to myself.' (130) For Donny, cutting is a simple act to prove to himself and to others that he exists, a strategy when people are powerless and find the only thing they can control is their bodies (Sierz 2000: 137). Therefore, when Pete

questions the authenticity of his scars because they are living in an era in which 'Everything's a fucking lie ... The food, the TV, the music... it's all pretend' (126), Pete has lost faith in the reality of those endless recording and re-telling of events via the internet, which seem to take the representative experience as superseding real life (Bathurst, 2005: 196-197). When Donny cuts his jugular and bleeds to death, Pete concludes: 'I guess he was just keen to prove that he was for real?' (133), even complaining that if Donny had read the relevant internet sites, he would not have cut himself in that position.

After they fail to staunch the blood and Donny truly dies, Alain panics and returns to his theory of 'Reality finished and simulation began'; at this moment, Pete tells him the truth: 'Reality just arrived' (132). Pete shoots Alain and left to ask his father for help. When he visits Alain in hospital in the next scene, he admits that joining his father in the board is a compromise: 'I hate my dad. But you offer despair, you know that? And it may be true, but it doesn't get us anywhere' (140). Pete has an epiphany that if such a nihilistic philosophy 'got us Donny', he must embrace his father's capitalism (Alderson, 2010: 869; Bathurst, 2005: 198-199). Pete's return to his father, announcing his reconciliation with the past, and his abandonment of his queer identity, symbolizes the abandonment of resistance and being swallowed up by the capitalistic machine, which does not belong to any civilization or cultural symbol. It annihilates the uniqueness of all individuals. This is the saddest betrayal for these two fugitives (Žižek, 2012: 138-9). Therefore, when Pete shows genuine concern for Alain, asking him to take his pills and get better, Alain concedes that he doesn't want to recover. Pete leaves a shoe-box to him containing Donny's eyes, thus echoing the earlier story of a woman who ripped her eyes out and sent them to her lover, reminding him that Donny is the logical conclusion of his philosophy (Bathurst, 2005:199; De Vos, 2012: 656). Later, Donny (as a spirit) comes back, promising Alain

he will never leave him and he should take his medicine. Donny cradles Alain, comforting him: 'That's it. Okay' (140). Cruelty brings back sensation to people who have lost their empathy or humanity in a capitalist world (De Vos, 2012: 657).

In the second step of 'Queer's Journey', Ravenhill reveals a fissure in human relationships caused by contemporary families becoming unstable and dysfunctional; the old emotional links between blood have been displaced by random personal feelings prescribed and promoted by the commercial media (Bathurst, 2005: 202-203). He uses the state of 'lost father/lost Grand narrative' to open a discussion about the prevailing 'new narrative/new daddy' and the escape via a nihilistic meaningless imagination (the two attitudes of people facing trauma). Ravenhill criticizes both and uses the discourse as Malabou's idea of 'natural catastrophe of contemporary politics'. Investigating the original culprit or attributing responsibility is no longer the focus, but the results of violent injury, unnecessary suffering, even painful death, to prolong the time the audience looks at those images; therefore, in the next step of the journey, Ravenhill created a unique spectator perspective to connect the audience with the suffering queer identity, and further derive the will to make changes.

2-4 Witnessing and suffering

This section will focus on exploring the violent scenes or disturbing subjects in Ravenhill's dramaturgy; as in the 'Queer's Journey', the characters and the audience experience a critical turning point at the same time. This is not only about how violent or brutal images are presented, but how the characters are involved in these actions. As discussed in previous sections, in the earlier British political theatre Edward Bond uses violent scenes as an "aggro-effect" to clarify that the cruelty of people can be manipulated by social constructions or dominant ideology. As Bond describes, ideal art is a 'rational objectivity' that expresses the need to fulfill a just social order (Bond, 1978: xiii). Therefore, he uses violence on stage to be didactic; in his terms, a "rational" persuasion of provoking audiences. For the political efficacy, as Bond admits: 'If I went on stoning babies in every play then nobody would notice it anymore. I had to find [continually new] ways of making people notice, of making those things effective' (as cited in Innes 2002: 169). Bond thinks his methods contrast with Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* effect (alienation effect):

it's necessary to disturb an audience emotionally to involve them emotionally in my plays, so I've had to find ways of making that "aggro-effect" more complete, which is in a sense to surprise them, to say "Here's a baby in a pram-you don't expect these people to stone that baby." Yet [snapping his fingers] they do.
(Bond, 1979: 112-113. As cited in Innes 2002: 168-9)

This can be demonstrated by Bond's background setting: many of his characters are living in worlds governed by rules that seem insane, and obeying orders only does more harm (Reinelt, 1996: 68). For example, in *The War Plays, Part Three: Great Peace*, a soldier is ordered to kill one random baby in his village. His mother persuades him to follow the order and kill the neighbour's baby. However, the soldier

ends up killing his own brother instead and is later shot for a trivial reason. A clearer example is in *Lear* (1971), when a commander orders his soldiers to burn and kill an innocent family. He yells: 'O burn the house! You've murdered the husband, slaughtered the cattle, poisoned the well, raped the mother, killed the child— you must burn the house! You're soldiers – you must do your duty.' (44-45) Bond vividly shows those soldiers murder the husband, crush the baby, and rape the wife. These atrocities cause the housewife Cordelia to lead a revolution for bloody and ruthless revenge. She commands her men to shoot a poor prisoner who wants to join her army because he is of no use; wounded soldiers are abandoned because 'when we have power these things won't be necessary' (58-59).

Bond depicts his characters as indifferent during or after the outrageous scenes: Fred in *Saved*, Scopey in *Pope's Wedding* or Cordelia in *Lear*. His characters are constantly deprived of their physical and emotional needs or threatened by poor governance. Finally, the accumulated discontent and resentment explodes into violent action. Those "assaulters" in Bond's plays are also "victims"; they are chained by social morality, serving the political system. Bond suggests this is like nuclear war: 'If we do not stop being violent, we have no future.' (Bond, 1972: vii). Bond utilises extremely violent images of warfare as Howard Brenton uses male rape in an invasion. He insists that if people see his play and are shocked by it, they will try to make a change. Bond notes: 'The starving will be fed only when the causes of starvation are removed, and the world will be at peace only when the causes of war are removed [...] you will escape nuclear destruction, only if you change society' (as cited in Nicholson, 2012: 254).

However, the dialectical processing of Bond's plays reveals that attempting to challenge injustice or oppression by violence is flawed. In *Lear*, when Cordelia finally overthrows the tyranny of Lear's daughters, she describes her vision of a better world

as: ‘we’ll make the society you only dream of’ and, ‘we won’t be at the mercy of brutes any more, we’ll live a new life and help one another’ (99). Lear disagrees: ‘You commit crimes and call them the law!’ (92) and, ‘Your law always does more harm than crime, and your morality is a form of violence’ (99). For Bond, ‘if you behave violently, then you create violence, which generates more violence. If you create a violent revolution, you always create a reaction’ (as cited in Nicholson, 2012: 158). He uses Lenin as an example: an idealistic violent revolution produced Stalin’s authoritarianism (without intending to do so); thus, Bond concludes that violent revolution replicates the crimes and systems they set out to overthrow (*Guardian*, 29 September 1971; as cited in Nicholson, 2012: 158). As Lear points out, nothing changed, not even the plan to build a colossal wall, which he started and caused all the following tragedy. Lear decides to stop the cycle of oppression and attempts to break the wall down; instead he is shot in front of it. But the important thing is, the process is witnessed: not only by the audience, but a small group of workers on stage. When Lear is dead, while most of the workers walk away quickly, Bond’s stage-direction reads: ‘*One of them looks back*’ (102). This gesture might be Bond’s suggestion that the next change is about to begin (Innes 2002: 157; Nicholson, 2012: 159). Bond instructs his audience to stay rational and humane: ‘Our lives are awkward and fragile and we have only one thing to keep us sane: pity, and the man without pity is mad’ (Bond, 1972: 98). Through creating pity, as the last symbol of humanity, Bond believes his dramaturgy could ultimately change the world.

Sierz analyses these shocking strategies, which can also be found in many in-ye-face dramaturgies; shock is one way to push the boundaries of the spectator’s habitual gaze, questioning ideas of what is acceptable, what is normal, what it means to be human and what is real. The use of shock here is part of a search for deeper meaning against the background of the postmodern age, when the boundary between good and

evil, true and false is not clear. Also, Sierz further argues there is a psychological trait behind the use of violence: when we feel the emotion behind the acting, we catch ourselves enjoying the violence vicariously. That may also tell us the unwelcome truth that violence is not foreign to our nature (Sierz, 2001: 5-9). In the article *You Can't Ban Violence from the Stage*, Ravenhill analyses his own plays *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* (2008), which challenged the Western-centred anti-terror war in Afghanistan and Iraq as simply labeling the “bad guys” and “good guys” using Western-liberalistic ideology (Laera, 2009: 6). Ravenhill states: ‘the plays are an honest attempt to express the brutality of our “clash of civilizations,” of “jihad” and “the war on terror,” the white noise that fills our everyday lives, driving us to act in irrational, cruel ways’ (Ravenhill, 2008c). In *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* he paints the darkest pictures of a ‘just’ war. Ravenhill stated the motivation for his writing in a 2013 Edinburgh festival speech:

to capture the truth of this new world we live in. [...] To write about the virtual markets of images and information spinning around us and threatening to drag us into perpetual postmodern giddiness. To write about the hypocrisy of our calls for universal freedom and democracy as we destroy the world for profit.

(Ravenhill, 2013; Bathurst, 2005: 184)

The phrase “freedom and democracy” becomes meaningless. In *Birth of a Nation*, a group wants to rebuild the ruined city, and find a Blind Woman. Those artists encourage her to paint, write or do anything to create or express herself; however, because of the ‘bitter war’ she has no tongue, no sight and no family. She can only scream when they ask her to perform. The scene ends as the Blind Woman spasms on the floor and the surrounding crowds applaud (209).

Another scene is set in an occupied house, between a soldier and a local woman

under his “protection”; the soldier humiliates her by threatening to masturbate onto her face at night, and the woman begs for some dignity. She says:

At least allow me some dignity, okay? I’m a person. I have money. I own a house. I have children in good schools. I own my company. Yes, we need you. Yes, there’s a war on. Yes, you’re protecting us. Yesyesyes, but for fuck’s sake, for fuck’s sake, for fuck’s ... give me a little ... Cum dribbling down my ... no, please. (104-105)

The soldier, like other soldiers in the play, is traumatized by warfare into an ‘inhuman monster’, as if he is wearing a horror mask representing excessive heterogeneity and otherness. His response to the woman’s pleading is ruthless: he will do whatever he likes to her (Žižek, 1999a: 156; Badiou & Žižek, 2009: 78). The nightmarish description of cruelty here is designed to cause the audience to pity the suffering characters through exaggerated experience; as Sarah Kane says, ‘It is important to commit to memory events which have never happened – so that they never happen. I’d rather risk overdose in the theatre than in life’ (quoted by Sierz, 2001: 239). Putting imaginary violence on stage forces audiences to acknowledge those indelible images of such atrocities that happen in real life (Stephenson, 1997: 133).

However, the greatest crisis Ravenhill faced in the 1990s distinguishes him from earlier playwrights like Bond and his interest in nuclear war discussed above. Ravenhill’s plays depict the world after the Cold War; the left-wing political ideology is compromised by the free-market system; and people are drifting into a uniform capitalist society without any moral framework. Their identities are delineated primarily by their roles in a system of commodities and commodification (Urban, 2004: 363; Sierz, 2001: 131). Therefore, the ‘violence’ in Bond’s plays, where political power is controlled by the ruling classes, differs from the more covert

‘Market’ that controls people in Ravenhill’s plays. As Bond uses explicit violence to argue that the dominant forces make the ‘assaulters’ into ‘victims’; Ravenhill uses the queer identity of his characters, to let us watch what happens to a group of people in society who were invisible or abandoned. Their poverty, marginalization, indulgence or lack of social responsibility makes them more likely to be classified as abnormal or even inhuman in the mainstream value of post-cold-war capitalism. Ravenhill asks us to witness their suffering, as a way to see those not seen, creating “events” of sex or violence to call attention to the voyeur in the audience and challenge our perspective on boundaries and transgression. Thus, Ravenhill reminds us, ‘victims’ of trauma may easily create trauma in others at any time (Svich, 2003: 83).

For example, in *Shopping and Fucking* (1996), young characters are either in poorly paid jobs or selling sex for money: as the powerful drug-dealing businessman Brian describes, everyone in the society is playing a game controlled by others (35). These characters are defined by the market, brought up in a decade when all that mattered was buying and selling (Sierz, 2001: 123). This reverses the power structures and gives the “victims” more complicated identities as “customers”. An obvious example is the end of *Shopping and Fucking*, when Gary demands that Robbie, Lulu and Mark fulfill his wish to be sodomized with a knife or a screwdriver, in return for paying their debt. When Lulu and Robbie refuse to do it because it might kill him. Gary uses the materialistic logic Mark used in previous scene as justifying his intention to pay Gary for sex: when money is exchanged, an act becomes a ‘transaction’ and, therefore ‘doesn’t actually mean anything’ (42). Gary justified his request as the fundamental rule of the capitalized world: ‘When someone's paying, someone wants something and they're paying, then you do it. Nothing right. Nothing wrong. It's a deal. So you do it. I thought you were for real’ (83). Here, having sex with someone or even killing them can be a simple business in this time; all the

characters know “the price of everything but the value of nothing” (Billingham, 2007: 137). The philosophy that ‘money is civilization and civilization is money’ leaves no place for love or personal connections (Urban, 2004: 368; Biçer, 2012: 117). Mark tries to prevent Gary’s suicide by confronting his true feelings for him, but Gary responds with: ‘Do it. Do it and I’ll say “I love you”’ (85). Mark finally helplessly promises to fulfil Gary’s desires, which he describes as using a knife for good, and takes place off stage. Although Gary’s earlier traumatic experience of enforced sexual encounter with his stepfather makes him the unwilling victim, Ravenhill inverts the notion of ‘victims-as-assaulters’ as the power dynamics are complicated by Gary’s control of the situation and the other characters. Thus, the victim is also the architect of his own death (Thomas, 2008: 36). As Ravenhill says, ‘I wanted the power situation at that moment to be dialectical.’ Gary ‘seems to be the victim, but actually it’s the others who have become victims because he’s led them to a point where he expects them to do something which horrifies them – and they’ve got to do it’ (in Sierz, 2000: 131; Bathurst, 2005: 188-192).

The distinctive dramaturgy here differs from other playwrights such as Bond, Brenton or Kane. The violence takes place offstage or far from the eyes of spectators, as at the end of *Shopping and Fucking*. The audience may not even be sure that the cruel event occurred; however, Ravenhill supplies a clue in the blood on Mark’s face. By concealing what has happened to the “victims”, Ravenhill pushes the audience to focus on the reasons for their suffering. As Peter Bingham discusses in *At the Sharp End* (2007), some victims in Ravenhill’s plays, such as Paul in *The Cut* (2006) and Gary in *Shopping and Fucking*-

Fetishize their own punishment and their own suffering. Even when the others tried to help, they refused. It’s impossible for those characters to let

go of their sense of being oppressed, because it's the only identity they have as once that's taken away, there was nothing left. That's absolutely terrifying for those characters.
(Billingham, 2007: 128)

Another method Ravenhill uses to conceal violence is recalling past events or narrating violent stories. For example, in *Faust is Dead*, Alain tells two mysterious stories of his postmodernist philosophy. One is about a woman sending her own eyes in a shoebox to her one-night-stand, who had told her he found her eyes the most attractive part of her body (9). Another tells of a woman meeting a man and reading a love poem to him, and the man pulls out a gun and shoots her dead, cuts her up, puts her in his bowl and eats her, all the time declaring his undying love for her (12). These stories seem too violent to be real; however, Ravenhill uses these violent actions against Alain at the end of the play. He becomes part of both stories when Pete shoots him and leaves him in the hospital with a box containing Donny's eyes (De Vos, 2012: 653-6). Ravenhill does not need to show the process of taking out Donny's eyes, but shows instead Donny's ghost with no eyes in the last scene.

As Dan Rebellato argues in 'Violence and the Body: Dissecting Recent British Drama' (2002): 'Violence on stage almost always looks ridiculous [...] the effect is rarely "convincing". [...] because we know it's not true, so we [are] immediately directed to look at how this effect is being produced' (26). When faced with the violent action on stage in front of us, it is easy for the audience to be reminded that this is a performance, a fiction; therefore they feel distanced and attend to irrelevant details (how did they cut off those body parts? Where did the blood come from? etc.). Therefore, as in the ending of *Agamemnon* when Aeschylus used the chorus to describe the atrocity of the queen Clytemnestra killing Agamemnon with an axe, Ravenhill also conceals the directly frightening image of the violence. He does not

rely on visual impact but rather chooses situations that are essentially private, such as sex, breaking the taboos to give his audience an overwhelming experience and becoming complicit by watching. He extends this with the characters' description, discussion or imagination of the sensations of cruelty, pleasure or pain, prompting audiences to imagine the atrocities for themselves. As the traumatized Gary forces the other characters to participate in his suffering, the audience is forced to become complicit in the violence, and also victims themselves (Sierz, 2001: 7).

Another distinctive characteristic of Ravenhill's violent dramaturgy is that he creates a new position as "witness" in the power struggle of oppressors and victims. To be a "witness" is an objective point of view from which one cannot ignore pain, humiliation and degradation. As John Freeman holds in *New Performance/ New Writing* (2007): 'seeing the character of Othello stage-strangling the character named Desdemona is soothing to watch [but] seeing and smelling the performance artist Franko B's blood is something to be witnessed' (Freeman, 2007: 110). Different from how Bond uses the under-class assaulter executing violence indifferently to provoke his audience, Ravenhill portrays the queer witness as inactive or unable to properly react when encountering violence, implying the guilt of inaction.

This should be related to the experience Ravenhill describes in his article 'A Tear in the Fabric', which motivated him to write. The toddler James Bulger was led away from a shopping centre by two ten-year-old boys, who viciously killed and sexually molested him. Ravenhill describes seeing that the murderers were both children. He felt not only grief for the dead, but a national sense of grief, and he decided: 'enough is enough, something has to change' (Ravenhill, 2004). Ravenhill senses that it is the age of 'children killing children', and people sighing when they watched the news but doing nothing. In *Shopping and Fucking*, when Lulu witnesses a knife robbery at the Seven-Eleven and does not intervene to help the girl behind the counter, but uses the

attack as cover to steal the chocolate bar. Peter Buse interprets this action as horrifying not because she did nothing to help, but rather the transgression against the rules of universal consumption, which dehumanized people, are automatically obeyed (in De Buck, 2009: 10). Lulu has blood on her face, which shows the event really took place, but she still feels: 'It's like it's not really happening there' and she can do nothing but watch (27). Robbie's response is equally careless and dehumanized: 'They must be used to it. Work nights in a shop like that, what do they expect?' (29) (Bathurst, 2005:189-90; De Buck, 2009: 10-11).

This disregard for others is what Ravenhill criticized as commodification. People treat others and themselves as objects, exchanging sex or violence for money in complicity with the oppressive system. It makes people disturbed because there's no obvious basis for moral judgement, and no projection of higher values beyond the logic of consensual transactions (Klein, 2011: 229). For example, *Mother Clap's Molly House* is set in nineteenth-century London. The audience witness the young country girl Amy becoming seduced into urban prostitution. She was excited and happy at first when she learnt the price of her body (13-14); then, in order to avoid pregnancy, which would damage her ability to earn money, she had an abortion that finally took her life (Thomas, 2008: 46). At the end of Act I, the host of the molly house ("the Mother-like" Mrs. Tull) finds Amy drenched in blood, she cries: 'Blood wun't stop. [...] Just wanted it out of me. Make it stop' (50). Mrs. Tull turns away to serve other customers but there is a dying woman in the next room. This critiques the worship of money, and of making "mother" a job title. In Act II of *Mother Clap's Molly House*, set in modern London, we see young queer Tina, obsessed with piercing herself whenever she gets bored. Her boyfriend Charlie complains, but does nothing to stop her. (57) She is only piercing herself to pass the time, and holds the same nihilist ideology as Mark in *Shopping and Fucking*: 'it doesn't mean anything.

Nothing means anything, does it?' (100)

In the last scene, Tina accompanies her drug-dealing boyfriend to a party; she gets bored and wants to pierce herself again. Tina cannot stop bleeding and lies down on the toilet floor. Again, Ravenhill conceals the brutal image of a woman dying covered in blood; he sends Charlie hurriedly looking for help on stage, where he finds himself watching awkwardly while two men have sex on a sofa. This image is a ridiculous but poignant one; these men are only interested in sex, and it never occurs to them to help the bleeding girl. They are finally interrupted when Charlie finally rushes onstage to apologetically tell them that Tina has stopped breathing (Thomas, 2008: 49).

Similarly, Lulu's indifference is broken when she has a phone-sex client masturbating to the surveillance video of the stabbing she witnessed. She hysterically unplugs all of the phones and collapses. Ravenhill argues here that when "helping someone who is in need" seems impossible, there is no reason to stay alive in such a society. When the audience hear of Tina's death, they may still yearn for "shopping or fucking" as the only happiness capitalism offers.

In my definition of the Queer's Journey, characters have 'queer identity' when they have been treated as marginal or abnormal in society as the part of no part. Driven by irresistible 'trauma experience', they only have a limited ability to care for themselves and are doomed to move towards extreme behaviours as a way to escape from reality or to feel alive. Ravenhill puts his audience in the position of 'witness' during this process, watching these people make this lonely journey, which also implies the audience experience the emotions of the 'queer' position. That gives them the shocking and startling feeling of having lived the others' lives. Ravenhill is not attempting to arouse sympathy or pity in his audience or to normalize their queerness. Instead, he wants them to admit that queer identities are concrete universals and recognise them as part of contemporary society. No matter how upset, disturbed or

provoked they might be, what does Ravenhill wants his audience to think or do when they leave the theatre? The answer might be suggested by those characters who reach the end of this 'Queer's Journey', becoming 'survivors' (Žižek, 1999a: 224; 2010: 124).

2-5 Survival as a political tactic

The last part of 'the Queer's Journey' is focused on the conclusion that Ravenhill offers after experiencing the queer characters' traumatic memories or suffering, and how he suggests his audience continue to survive bearing physical or psychological scars. Ravenhill dialectically underscores the need for some point of resistance, some assertion of value to counter the dehumanizing effects of global capitalism (Dogan, 2014: 54). Sierz comments on Ravenhill's dramas that they lack alternative suggestions or ways of stopping the destruction of human life (Sierz, 2000: 37) and theatre scholar Vera Gottlieb criticizes Ravenhill's plays: 'Technical sophistication masks an emptiness of content' (Gottlieb, 1991: 210). The most deficient part in Ravenhill's plays is that he seems unable to offer any solutions, and his characters rarely complete an heroic self-awakening, usually ending in their acknowledgment of their flaws, anxiety and confusion. As Wade states: 'Ravenhill remains desirous of some force or appeal that might assuage the troubling aspects of unchecked global capitalism'. She also sums up Ravenhill's inner conflict: 'Ravenhill appears ambivalent on this matter, nostalgic for a larger ideological frame from which to combat a marketplace that reduces all to commodity, yet suspicious of any totalizing outlook that is too certain of its premises and proposals' (Wade, 2008: 296). Wade describes Ravenhill as ambivalent in the final scene of *Shopping and Fucking*, when Robbie and Lulu finally accept Brian's money and eat a microwave dinner together. By making the end so similar to the beginning, it seems Ravenhill only creates uncertainty for his audience (De Buck, 2009: 6-7).

However, this 'quiet' ending is actually derived from reality, which echoes Bauman (1993): he describes how the 'postmodern perspective' is marked by an acknowledgment of the 'essentially ambivalent condition of morality' (10-11); the foundations of traditional ethical enquiry (such as the grand narrative) have been

eroded, which signals ‘the demise of the ethical’ or as ‘the substitution of aesthetics for ethics’ (2). However, Bauman argues that great issues of ethics such as ‘human rights, social justice, balance between peaceful co-operation and personal self-assertion, synchronization of individual conduct and collective welfare’ (4) have not lost their topicality, but need to be seen in a novel way. Therefore, by the absence of conventional, expected moral clarity or political positioning at the end, it makes Ravenhill’s plays more provocative and effectively forces his audience who leaves the theatre feeling some degree of ambivalence and dissatisfaction, and more likely to reflect on the work for longer or even tried to answer those questions for themselves (Wallace, 2005: 62).

Generally, Ravenhill uses two interweaving storylines as his trademark, showing someone compromised by capitalism and introducing unsettled young characters. This is then dialectically opposed by different ideologies: as in *Shopping and Fucking* when Brian says to Robbie and Lulu, ‘At the end of the day, at the final reckoning, behind beauty, behind God, behind paradise, peel them away and what is there?’ (48). Later he goes on, ‘The answer is simply money’, and this is the new age of ‘Get the money first’ (87). He teaches Lulu in a previous scene how to sell products on television, and that the purchasers must believe that what they are selling is special: ‘For the right sum – life is easier, richer, more fulfilling. And you have to believe that, too’ (35). This reveals the capitalistic ideology Brian holds: creating a reason for shopping matters, and reality is irrelevant. Lulu performs Chekov’s *Three Sisters* for her interview, using a paragraph describing how work can be meaningful for mankind, and Brian suddenly asks her to take off her blouse. Ravenhill’s characters encounter these obstructions, forcing every individual to believe themselves to be products in the capitalist system, gradually losing their autonomy and identity (Kostic, 2011: 40).

The young queer Robbie also challenges the dominant capitalistic ideology in the

play, when he gets high on drugs; he seems himself sublimated into observing the world from above, witnessing suffering and war around the world: a crying child in Rwanda and a granny in Kiev selling everything she owns. This god-like feeling makes him cry out in disgust: 'Fuck money. Fuck it. This selling. This buying. This system. Fuck the bitching world and let's be [...] beautiful. Beautiful and happy' (89). He gives all the tablets to anyone who asks. He enjoys the act of generosity and describes an out-of-body experience, and perhaps this is one of the most hopeful moments in the play. However, this behaviour leads Robbie to be beaten when he runs out of pills (Thomas, 2008: 33). Both Robbie and Lulu become even more bound to the 'capitalistic system' of buying and selling to pay their debt (Alderson, 2010: 865). People cannot survive outside society. Therefore, individuals are often powerless when they confront a collective social system.

Ravenhill uses characters not only preaching the value of capitalism, but revealing their awareness of the defects of ideology they may have believed in. Brian's final speech to Robbie contributes strongly to this case, his brutal yet subsequently benevolent presence dictates the underlying values of the play:

Life is hard. On this planet. Intractable. I can tell you this because I feel it. Yes, like you I have felt this. We work, we struggle. And we find ourselves asking: what is this for? Is there meaning? I know you've... I can see this question in your eyes. You ask yourself these questions. Right now-yes? We need something. A guide. A talisman. A set of rules. A compass to steer us through this everlasting night. Our youth is spent searching for this guide until [...] some give up. Some say there is nothing. There is chaos. We are born into chaos. But this is... no. This is too painful. This is too awful to contemplate. This we deny. Am I right? (86)

After Lulu and Robbie show themselves to be caught up in the capitalist web by unscrupulously repaying their debt, Brian inexplicably returns the money to them and

persuades the younger characters to adopt and preach his new belief in basic values and techniques to survive in contemporary society:

It's not perfect. I don't deny it. We haven't reached perfection. But it's the closest we've come to meaning, Civilisation is money. Money is civilization. [...] how did we get here? By war, by struggle, kill or be killed. And money – it's the same thing, you understand? The getting is cruel, is hard, but the having is civilisation. Then we are civilised. (87)

Here, capitalism is something Brian clings onto after paradise was taken away by God. He describes how some art can unintentionally recall feelings or memories from heaven: 'Something so beautiful that you've lost but you'd forgotten that you've lost it' (43). However, this also justifies Brian's ideology of capitalism, as this art only exists because Brian has paid for it (De Buck, 2009: 20; Bathurst, 2005:190).

However, the capitalist ideology Brian stands for forces every individual in society to participate as consumers who can popularize objects or practices. Power, ultimately, is controlled by business. As a consequence of people being conditioned to have only selfish and possessive desires, there appears to be an atrophy of emotional life. This alienates people from themselves and other human beings when acts of cruelty take place. This is not because people are driven by innate aggression, but because they no longer feel any emotional bond to other people (see Kostic: 2011). For example, in the scene when Brian threatens Lulu and Robbie, saying that they must repay his debt in seven days with their lives, he behaves as an all-powerful god (Horan, 2012: 259). Ravenhill deliberately juxtaposes two screens in this scene showing: 'his son's cello performance' which made Brian cry; another showing 'a man being tortured for being unable to pay his debt.' Brian's tears demonstrate that he is not a ruthless person, but the rule of the capitalist system is. Later, Lulu and Robbie

argue with Gary because they do not want to kill him, Gary argues using the materialistic logic of the capitalist principle: 'When someone's paying, someone wants something and they're paying, then you do it. Nothing right. Nothing wrong. It's a deal. So you do it' (83) (Bathurst, 2005:192). They are persuaded and Gary dies, but they earn the money they need to pay their debt. However, when they return it to Brian, he gives them the money as a reward for his new disciples. The whole process is like a trial, which transforms these two unidentified queers with the problematic ideology "killing others for your benefit is acceptable." As Rebellato states in the preface of *Mark Ravenhill's Plays: I*, Brian is teaching the younger generation as a father-figure: 'The father that could have saved us has stepped aside, and we are left facing the father who will crush us' (Rebellato, 2001: xiv).

As in Michael Billington's review of *Mother Clap's Molly House*, 'the theme of commodification of sex and the resultant loss of love' echoes through each of Ravenhill's plays (quoted in Bathurst, 2005: 213); however, critics that describe Ravenhill's plays as ambiguous or ambivalent do so because Ravenhill does not offer a substitute for capitalism. He states that the political predicament of his time is without an alternative ideology. In an interview with Dan Hutton (2014), he stated that 'Both the beauty and the terror about capitalism is that it's ultimately suicidal,' because as every year goes by it makes people more and more in debt, so it becomes harder and harder to imagine any alternative. And he argues: 'if you want to renew capitalism you need a space where people can think afresh [...] But if there's no space that side, then capitalism is hastening its own death, even though it may take down the planet and humanity with it' (Hutton, 2014). This suicidal feature of capitalism haunts characters in many of Ravenhill's plays, such as Gary in *Shopping and Fucking*, Donny in *Faust is Dead*, or Tim in *Some Explicit Polaroids*. However, Ravenhill also recognises that commercial capitalism dominates culture and is central to the lives of

many people. As for those mollies and sexual dissidents, without the molly house, their opportunities to pursue love and sex would be greatly reduced. Therefore, recognition is much important than criticism in Ravenhill's work; he intends to create a space for his audience to understand the capitalistic world they live in.

Therefore, another feature of Ravenhill's dramaturgy is the characters who "survive" witnessing or encountering violence, switching their ideological positions or values during the play. Dialectically, this functions as a process of the mostly queer individuals overcoming their former obsessions and gradually recognizing their true identity. For example, in *Some Explicit Polaroids*, the young prostitute Victor comes from the communist Russia. He immediately embraces hedonism and self-indulgence, reinforced by the 'ironic illusion with perverse pride in their consumption of junk food, pornography, and other products of "trash" culture' (45) (Klein, 2011: 232.) And Ravenhill depicts his ideology changing as he claims he 'hate socialist[s]' in dialogue with Nick, 'This lie. This deception. This progress. Big fucking lie' (270-271); this exposes that Victor accepts hedonism without reservation, because for him capitalism and socialism are both meaningless political lies. However, the political apathy and the narcissism of worshipping his own body did not protect Victor from the tragic death of his lover and owner Tim (De Buck, 2009: 30). This overwhelming pain forces him to reconsider the meaning of life: 'There's got to be more than this. What is there? This is ... animals. What makes us better than animals? Revolution never saved us. Money never saved us. No love. I want more than this.' (69) Victor comes up with a sentimental but also ridiculous way to solve the sadness, as he says: 'What is it? Children? To have a child? Is that what save us? I can't have a child. Fuck this gay. Fuck these men and their fucking together' (69) He ended up cursing himself and all the gay men in desperation.

Victor cannot control his feelings of love or loneliness and chooses to escape to

Tokyo in order to start a new life as a porno actor; his ideology does not change drastically; rather he chooses to run away from the problems. However, the death of Tim takes on a particularly painful resonance to Nadia, who used to want to live in an eternal present where each moment that passes is filed away into the distant past. For example, when Nick tells her that he was in prison, she refuses to let him tell the details. She says: 'The past is gone, okay' (257). But now, she starts to worry that their belief that 'nothing means anything' has caused Tim stop taking medication. This results in a later confrontation with Jonathan, who might be the only character that has an answer for her. Jonathan tells Nadia that is fine to feel the depressed way she does: 'Everything is terrible. Nothing means anything. There's nobody out there. I'm alone in the universe' (292), and the best solution is to embrace the chaotic capitalist world as he did: 'Ever second a new opportunity, every second a new disaster. The endless beginnings, the infinite endings' (293). Finally, Nadia realises that she has perpetuated her destructive relationship with Simon merely because she is afraid of being alone. She decides to change: 'I'm going to be on my own and I'm going to learn to do that. Hours of ... days of ... no one else' (305). She seems suddenly grown-up and decides to be independent, and says to Nick that '[I] don't need you anymore. What I want is to be on my own. Anything else is just running away.' (306) Tim's death has offered Nadia and Victor space in which to reflect on what they have witnessed. Victor tells Nadia he will forget her immediately, but she answers: 'I'll remember. I want to remember' (307) (De Buck, 2009: 32-42; Kritzer, 2008: 46). Here, it seems Ravenhill suggests the cure for meaningless or loneliness is to embrace the flow of global capital, using money to fill the void of our souls. However, Ravenhill also suggests another option: after meeting with Jonathan and hearing his theory about global marketing, Nick was persuaded to make concessions and dream about improving society. In the face of reality, he lost confidence and conviction. But Helen encourages

him to return to the angry youth he once was: 'I want to make you into what you used to be' (314). It may not be time for a grand narrative of socialism, but the narratives of the debilitating power of individual lives together are still meaningful (Urban, 2006: 172-178; Bathurst, 2005: 205-206). Ravenhill indicates a crucial step of surviving in the capitalized world is that people need to make decisions on their own and take responsibility; he does not judge whether the choice was right or wrong, but only suggested alternative possibilities.

According to Dan Rebellato in the introduction to *Mark Ravenhill: Plays 1*, if Ravenhill's plays demonstrate 'the steady erosion of our common lives', they also 'affirm what needs to be preserved', and this sense of affirmation is in the end more important and more politically radical, than any shock tactics or scandal (xix-xx). What does Ravenhill 'affirm to preserve' in his works for the surviving characters? At the end of *Shopping and Fucking*, after the whole play emphasises that microwave-food cannot be shared, implying the fundamentally isolating quality of the consumerist society (Rebellato, 2001: xi; Horan, 2012: 263), the remaining characters Mark, Robbie and Lulu share and take turns to feed each other, thus mirroring the opening scene of the play; which also suggested a glimpse of an opportunity to overcome indifference through small changes in behaviour (Wallace, 2005: 271; Svich, 2003: 82; Bathurst, 2005: 193). As Billington remarks, this stereotypical consumption could be transformed into a peace-offering and a symbolic, fragile redemption of broken relationships (as cited in De Buck, 2009: 12). At the dinnertable, Ravenhill decides that Mark should repeat the old story of how he first meets the baby Lulu and Robbie in a supermarket, and buys them from a fat man; as in the story, there was a mutual understanding when Mark saw them: 'I'm watching you. And you're both smiling. You see me and you know straight away that I'm going to have you. You know you don't have a choice' (3); they both accept the transactional

relationship. But this time the story is set in an imaginary future as in Baudrillard's postmodern condition in which the individual flees from the 'desert of the real' in favour of the hyperreal (Bertens, 1995, 150) and he buys a mutant in the supermarket, this time choosing to free him. It is clear the mutant symbolises Gary, as Mark takes him home. The mutant begs to be Mark's slave because he lacks the abilities to survive: 'I'll die. I don't know how to... I can't feed myself. I've been a slave all my life. I've never had a thought of my own. I'll be dead in a week' (89). This desire for slavery appears to be a choice, something that the mutant selects from a range of options. In the parable, Mark sees an option that the mutant does not see: he sets the mutant free with the attitude, 'That's a risk I'm prepared to take' (90). After Mark finishes his story, Lulu says she likes that ending and he responds that 'It's the best I can do' (90) (Thomas, 2012: 201-2). By retelling this story, Ravenhill reveals the more mature emotional bond within this queer family, which optimistically preserves their humanity and the ability to love.

Ravenhill ends by turning a piece of gritty realism into an urban fairy tale; the drug dealer gives the money back, and the queer youths find a new way to survive together, peaceful and altruistic. However, his audience, as the witnesses of this 'Queer's Journey', also understand how fragile and short-lived these peaceful scenes are. In this journey, Ravenhill forces his characters to look again at what they feel, believe and want to do; and because of their trauma, those queer characters make the things we otherwise take for granted suddenly unpredictable. Therefore, violence is what enables each of them to break out, however briefly, of the prison of loneliness. Ravenhill creates a cycle that brings the political and the social into a self-conscious connection with each individual in every corner of society (Gibson, 2014: i). His plays propose to recognize of the coexistence of good and evil in the modern world; as in a Guardian article entitled 'A Touch of Evil' (22, March 2003), Ravenhill

describes the motives behind his dramaturgy:

‘To capture the truth of this new world we live in is an exciting ambition.
To write about the virtual markets of images and information spinning
around us and threatening to drag us into perpetual postmodern giddiness.
To write about the hypocrisy of our calls for universal freedom and
democracy as we destroy the world for profit.’
(Cited from Bathurst, 2005: 184)

He calls attention to, and at the same time questions, the contemporary capitalized society. As mentioned before, Ravenhill criticizes capitalistic commercialization as it dehumanizes people, but also recognise that consumerism defines existence (Sierz, 2001: 134-135). This is precisely in response to the anxiety I feel towards contemporary Taiwanese democratic politics: seeing clearly the problems of the system, but also knowing the necessity of the system. Ravenhill uses marginal ‘queer identity’ in the *Queer’s Journey* to offer this specific perspective, derived from its anti-assimilationist posture, from its shocking embrace of the abnormal, instead of been absorbed into the orthodox institutions of knowledge. This is like Emmanuel Levinas’s argument of knowing the queer face of the ‘Other’, which becomes an inward necessity for self-realisation to shape a more reasonable and obligated self-identity (Wallace, 2005: 56). This also echoes Taiwan’s marginalized position in the international world, and the current situation in the country where self-identity is broken and difficult to generalize. Ravenhill’s methodology provides an excellent revelation, as if Taiwan wants to build a better national identity to save the collapse of our democracy by establishing a concrete political ‘consensus’ of the imaginary community, it will eventually lead to the path as Rancière criticized as closing the space for differences. Perhaps we must start by re-understanding ourselves, firstly recognising the ‘dissensus’ of our society; on this basis, to further consider the

direction we want to take in Taiwan's politics, and what obligations we should assume in order to survive in democratized Taiwan (Halperin, 2003: 341-342; Rancière, 2004: 304-306).

Chapter 3: *Voting and Fucking*

GREEN
MARK
LILIAN
BILLY
CHERRY
ANDY
BLUE
TOM
DOG
CHRIS
MAN
JAILOR
EVE
DAVE
HOST

* '/' denote overlapping conversation.

ONE

In the lobby of a government building, GREEN, a girl with obviously green hair is writing her protest on the floor with chalk: 'When dictatorship is a fact, revolution becomes a duty.' She uses a paper stencil to paint a women's head on the floor. A guard, MARK, comes over to her, carrying a flashlight.

MARK: What are you doing? You aren't supposed to be in here.

GREEN: This is a public space.

MARK: Actually, it's not. This is government property. And we have been informed
that all that protesting crowds are only allowed in the square.

GREEN: And to be ignored forever.

MARK: So you think breaking into a government building at four in the morning is a better idea? How did you get in anyway?

GREEN: The window is unlocked. Somebody should do their job better.

GREEN keeps painting the woman's head on the floor.

MARK: (*Tries to intervene*) Stop, what's that about? Who's that?

GREEN: You know Lady CHRIS?

MARK: The one who burned herself to death?

GREEN: She's the first female martyr, who dared to stand up against the dictatorship.

Without her we would never have had this building: Your boss should remember that.

MARK: I think they should. But you're still not supposed to do that here, there will be many members of parliament here tomorrow, this is a government building!

GREEN: Yeah and a free country too. The last time I checked, the Constitution protects my right to write down anything I want to say.

MARK: You are making it hard for me, lady. I will call the police if you don't stop.

GREEN: For what? For writing something I believe and you don't? Since when did we lose our right to accuse the government when they are dictatorial and hegemonic?

Beat, MARK looks at what GREEN has written.

MARK: Why chalk?

GREEN: Huh?

MARK: Just, you know, I don't want to upset you. But I will have to mop it all up

later, so nothing will be left tomorrow.

GREEN: Then I will come back tomorrow.

MARK: So, you don't have to work, huh? (*Beat*) Why don't you use something harder to clean up?

GREEN: Like what?

MARK: I don't know? Marker, spray paint?

GREEN: You will clean that up as well.

MARK: Yeah, probably. But it can definitely last longer.

GREEN: How long?

MARK: I thought you wanted to make it stick--

GREEN: Like forever?

MARK: Well, nothing is forever.

GREEN: (*Beat, looks at the chalk*) Maybe you're right. But to be honest, I don't really want to piss your boss. I stop my job already, can't afford to pay if they fine me.

MARK: You're an artist or something?

GREEN: Something. (*Keeps drawing*) I sell clothes online, T-shirts, dresses, short pants, jewelry which I designed. And sometimes I wear them to makes the prices better.

MARK: Sounds like a decent business.

GREEN: I am good at it. A good designer knows what people want.

MARK: Yeah?

GREEN: You are thinking I'll never know what you want.

MARK: Wow. You're good.

Noise of GUARD's radio, he picks it up.

MARK: *(into radio)* It's MARK. What? Slow down, what happened? *(Beat)* For real?

Okay, calm down. I'll be there soon. *(Beat)* No, there's nothing wrong here.

(turns off radio) I think you better go now. An accident happened near your camp. And my colleague says the police force is coming.

GREEN: You're just letting me go?

MARK: Don't go out there and get yourself caught.

GREEN gets up, opens her arms.

GREEN: Come here, I want to give you a hug.

MARK: No thank you.

GREEN: Come on. I'm an excellent hugger. *(Open her arms)*

MARK awkwardly comes near and GREEN embraces him.

GREEN: Promise me you won't mop them all up as soon as I leave.

MARK: I'll try not to.

GREEN leaves, MARK looks at the words on the floor.

Blackout.

TWO

In a live studio, the HOST is interviewing LILIAN.

HOST: Hello and welcome to today's Focused Figure. Let's welcome our special guest for today, newly announced as the first female candidate for mayor, and the best looking woman in the congress. Let's welcome councilor LILIAN.

(Cheer voices)

LILIAN: It's an honor to be here, Larry. Hello everyone.

HOST: Councilor, firstly big congratulations on your nomination, we know it's not easy especially for a lady like you, would you maybe want to share your joy with the audience first?

LILIAN: Yes, thank you Larry, I feel very lucky because there were so many great opponents, and I want to thank all the voters who supported me and had my back, I'm so grateful for this opportunity. It's a small victory, but also the biggest one.

HOST: We are all very excited, councilor. We all can't wait to see if we will have such a gorgeous mayor for the capital. *(Laugh)* But I admit I was shocked when I first heard the news that you had agreed to be recruited. Because for so many years you have been sitting beside the chairman, councilor Dave Hams, *(Show DAVE's picture)* as a perfect assistant, we never thought that you might be interested in competing for mayor. But now, you have run against him for the nomination, and you won. How did that happen?

LILIAN: Let me correct you on one thing Larry, DAVE and I are best friends. There's no competition between us. He is the smartest chairman and a talented congressman. And the fact is, he was the first nominee of our party; but he had

to withdraw for medical reasons. I pray for his health every day because, after all, governing this city will require his wisdom.

HOST: There are rumors that he is recommending you as the substitute candidate because the polls weren't looking good at the time. Does that make sense to you?

LILIAN: Larry, Dave and I have known each other since we both were organizing student movements on the streets. We fought the autocratic government in the 90s. Believe me; he's not the kind of person who will give up easily.

HOST: But it was a hard fight for you too, the numbers were bad, right?

LILIAN: At the beginning, I was 20% behind.

HOST: But according to the latest polls, you did a fabulous job of getting ahead of the others. (*Cheering voices*) You have a great talent for winning people's love, but of course, your competitors don't love you one bit: do you want to hear some of their criticisms?

LILIAN: Of course.

HOST: (*Showing a column*) The leader of the opposition party describes you as lacking political experience, with no practical achievements; some other councilor says you don't cooperate well, that you make arbitrary decisions and aren't a good negotiator. You want to reply to any of that?

LILIAN: I thank everyone for their comments, but they don't really know me. I'm from the street generation, who fought for liberation for more than twenty years. I have plenty of experience dealing with conflict between politicians and the public, I know what people want, and I know our duty is to fulfil our voter's expectations. So I don't want to be just a popular talker, I want to be a worker. I want to make change, and sometimes this is pretty offensive, even to our own comrades.

HOST: It's a lot of pressure.

LILIAN: It is. I still remember when DAVE called me to tell me that the party needs me, to be honest, the feeling of responsibility was overwhelming, that was the hardest moment of my life, having to make that decision.

HOST: Yeah, we all know what a campaign looks like. So, what made you make up your mind?

LILIAN: In fact, it's my family that encouraged me. My husband knew I was worried, but he told me there was nothing to worry about; the kids are old enough now, I should take this opportunity to follow my dream.

HOST: That's very sweet. Your secret weapon is the support of your family. (*Showing a picture with LILIAN and TOM*) We all know you are happily married to Tomas Weinstein, but many audiences might not know that your husband was a war hero, and now is the vice commander of National Security Agency. What a wonderful couple you are.

LILIAN: (*Smile*) It's funny when I first meet him, God, I was arrested for leading an "illegal" parade for the movement; and he was in the military and ordered to make the arrests, he handcuffed me. And I was trying to give him a political lesson on the way to the police station. When I was been released, he asked me if I can give him more lesson in private.

HOST: That's so romantic. (*Showing a picture with LILIAN and a pair of cute twins*) How about your kids? As I remember you have a pair of lovely twins, right? Are they excited about their mom's achievement? What's their reaction to all of this?

LILIAN: It's strange you know, although they are twins, my son doesn't care about politics, but my daughter is just like me. They don't live with us anymore since they are grown up and have their own lives. (*Pause, smiles*) But they are very

independent children, they never worry me. Whenever I see them, they give me the power and willingness to make things better, they teach me that our obligation is to make this world better for the people we love.

HOST: Just as you said in your pre-election speech, good families are the basis for a good society. I'm so envious that you have such a wonderful family, LILIAN. Now, for our last question, we know that a student movement has occupied the square of the parliament now, they are against the newest trading deal your party is going to sign. As a veteran protester, do you have any suggestions for them? Do you worry they might affect the election situation?

LILIAN: That's actually a great question. I know the students believe what they are doing is in our national interest. But still, there's a huge misunderstanding between them and the government; all the legislation procedures are legal and we are willing to work on modifying the process, so there's no need to overreact. I want to ask that everyone remain calm and not make any sudden movements; there's nothing more concerning to your parents than your safety. We are going to have an election in three months, so use your right to vote to have an impact. That's democracy; we must have faith in what we have now. That's what I have always been fighting for.

HOST: Amen, thank you LILIAN. After some messages from our sponsors, we will answer questions called in from the audience. Stay tuned!

Applause and music.

Blackout.

THREE

In the lobby of the first scene, there's the sound of a police siren from faraway. BILLY, CHERRY sit together watching the show from the last scene on a phone; GREEN strolls around anxiously.

BILLY: Is that really your mum on the show?

GREEN: Stop watching that stupid show. We are hiding now.

Beat.

BILLY: She looks nice. Pretty, confident, I will vote for her.

CHERRY: I will vote for anyone wearing those shoes. And yeah, she's pretty, I want to look like her when I get to her age.

BILL: I bet you will. (*Whisper to CHERRY*) Why aren't they getting along?

CHERRY: (*Whisper*) I don't know, she never talks about it. (*To Green*) Is everything OK?

GREEN: (*Beat*) I'm worried about them.

CHERRY: We all are. (*Hold her one hand*) Don't worry, they will be fine.

Beat.

BILLY: How do you know how to break into here?

GREEN: I just know.

BILLY: I mean, it's brilliant to hide in here. No police will ever find us. (*Looks around*) I can't believe that I'm actually inside the parliament building!

There's a sound from the outside, they are all scared. ANDY climbs in from the window, he is carrying a backpack. GREEN rushes to hug him.

GREEN: ANDY, thank God. (*Looks around*) Where's BLUE?

ANDY: (*Shakes head*) I don't know. I got your message telling me to come here.

There are cops everywhere.

GREEN: What do you mean you don't know? I saw you were together.

ANDY: It happened so soon, just ... We got separated by all the people. And then a fight started, it's chaotic. Did you call him?

GREEN shakes head.

CHERRY: How? What happened?

ANDY: The police broadcasts are saying there's a fire, and maybe they are using it as an excuse to drive people away. I don't know.

BILLY: A fire? How can there be a fire?

ANDY: I heard someone yelling that there was a bomb. It's chaos.

CHERRY: Did anyone die?

ANDY: I don't know.

Beat. They check on their phone.

BILLY: Shit, shit. It's bad isn't it? They will think we are terrorists, that's why they are arresting our people.

GREEN: (*Push ANDY*) You said it would be a safe demonstration. You promised.

ANDY: Hey, I can't control everything, what happened is not my fault.

Beat.

GREEN: Did you watch him get arrested?

ANDY: No.

GREEN: Tell me the truth.

ANDY: I said no. What do you want me to say?

BILLY: Come on, Green, BLUE is so smart, he will be fine.

CHERRY: Yeah, and we will help you to find him later. Won't we?

GREEN: He is not fine. (*Beat*) I shouldn't have asked him to come, he doesn't even know what we are protesting about.

ANDY: You care too much about him, he's your older brother not your kid.

GREEN: What do you know?

ANDY: The only thing I know is everyone agreed to this voluntarily, I never forced you or your beloved brother to come right?

Beat.

GREEN: I cannot believe this.

ANDY: What we were doing is serious. We protested something we know it is wrong.

And we are willing to fight for it. It's a revolution, it's a war. Why the fuck do I need to babysit a moron who doesn't give a shit about this war?

GREEN: (*Pushing him hard*) Maybe it is because you were fucking his sister during the war.

Pause, Green is leaving, ANDY tries to pull her back.

ANDY: Where are you going?

GREEN: I'm going to find him myself.

ANDY: It's not safe.

GREEN: Now you're telling me.

BILLY: Hey guys, stop.

CHERRY: Come on, Green. You know he's right.

Beat.

GREEN: So what, we just wait in here?

ANDY: You know I'm on your side. But we need to protect ourselves now, we can't be arrested over nothing, or be framed by the police. It will ruin the whole movement.

CHERRY: So when should we go?

BILLY: A couple more hours maybe? We don't want to take any unnecessary risks.

Beat, ANDY looks around.

ANDY: Or, we don't go anywhere. *(Beat)* What if we tell everybody to come here?

BILLY: What?

ANDY: We call everyone and occupy this place. *(To others)* Look, you just remind me, this accident might also be the best opportunity for us. *(Raise his phone)* All the headlines are reporting what is happening here; Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, everywhere; so many violent images and videos of police are all

over the internet, all over the country now. People are noticing us, sympathizing with us: this might be our final chance.

GREEN: Are you serious?

ANDY: We can use those chairs to block the main entrance, and occupy the room. If we can get fifty people here, we can do it.

BILLY: it will be done before they even notice. It could actually work.

Beat, GREEN looks at what she painted on the floor earlier.

GREEN: What about BLUE? Just fuck him?

ANDY: We can do more for him if we succeed here.

GREEN: Like what?

BILLY: I think he means if we don't get caught, then we might find a way to help him later.

CHERRY: Yeah kiddo, maybe he is fine, maybe he already got home. We can't separate now, we have to stay together.

ANDY: GREEN. I was wrong about you and your brother. I know how important he is to you, I do. *(Beat)* But I'm angry because of the unfairness we have suffered from the beginning of this protest, there's not only BLUE, but also others. I promise I will do everything to help them all after this. *(Beat)* But, I really need you be here. Please stay with me.

Beat.

GREEN: I'll stay.

CHERRY: *(Hugs her)* Nice! I knew it.

BILLY: Yeah, it's like we were at the beginning again.

GREEN: Keep your voice down. *(Beat)* I can't believe I'm saying this, but let's make it work.

BILLY: Come on, let's bring some chairs out now. And you guys start to contact people.

BILLY and CHERRY leave. Beat.

ANDY: Thank you. *(Beat)* I am sorry about your brother.

GREEN: He is the one always trying to protect me.

ANDY: He will be fine.

ANDY kisses GREEN. GREEN notices ANDY's bag.

GREEN: Why are you carrying BLUE's bag? *(Points at a pin on the bag)* I gave him this, where did you get it?

ANDY: Really, it must been a mistake, they look alike and I didn't notice in a hurry.

Ah, maybe his phone is in it, no wonder you can't reach him. *(Open)* Hey, what's this? *(Take out a large envelope from the bag)*

GREEN: What's in it?

ANDY: *(Looks inside, Beat)* You will never fucking believe it.

Blackout.

FOUR

In an interrogation room, BLUE, who wears a courier's uniform, sits in front of a video recorder. TOM puts a dozen bottles of water on the table, slowly opens the package.

TOM: Would you like some more water?

BLUE doesn't answer.

TOM: You should have some. *(Beat)* It looks like you need it, you look like shit.

Beat. TOM drinks some and puts the bottle in front of BLUE

TOM: Your mum is worried about you.

BLUE: About what?

TOM: She's afraid you may fall into depression again.

BLUE: I'm fine now.

TOM: No you aren't, you only want you to think you are. *(turns on the recorder)* OK, back to the business. Would you explain why you were at the crime scene?

BLUE shakes his head slowly.

TOM: Talk. We are recording.

BLUE: What crime scene?

TOM: There was an arson at the parliament square this morning; someone

deliberately set fires in the open to hurt people. *(Beat)* Do you want to explain what were you doing there?

BLUE: I was just passing by.

TOM: Of course, all you guys say that. *(Puts a box of glass bottles on the table, and take one of them out)* Do you know what these are?

BLUE: It smells like gasoline.

TOM: Correct. These are all searched out from your camp. Do you know how these work? *(Puts a towel inside the bottle)* See, a simple gasoline bomb. Pretty straight forward, huh? Want to know how many of these we found in your pack? *(Beat)*

BLUE: *(Shake head)* It's not mine/

TOM: Shh, don't interrupt me. Be cooperate, you might get out of here with no troubles. *(Puts one hand on BLUE's shoulder)* Will you cooperate?

BLUE: *(Beat)* I will.

TOM: Good. Now drink your water.

BLUE drinks some water.

TOM: Do you know what day it is today?

BLUE: It's Sunday.

TOM: Yeah, God doesn't work today, but we are here.

Beat.

TOM: We had one officer down this morning on duty. *(Beat)* Had a heart attack, or some shit, his heart just stopped beating. *(Beat)* I knew him for a long time. We trained together for the special commando forces and worked together on

the same team. We exchanged fire with terrorists, arrested the most dangerous criminals, and survived. *(Beat)* He was a good man, a friend. We used to go fishing together every Sunday. But now I have to fish alone.

BLUE: I am sorry to hear that.

TOM: Yeah, me too. *(Takes the bottle)* Things are getting out of control very easily now.

Beat.

BLUE: I didn't know you like to go fishing.

TOM: It's because we haven't talked for a long time; since you left. *(Beat)* That's why I came here; I wanted to talk to you in person.

BLUE: Isn't that some kind of conflict interest?

TOM: We are short of manpower. And it is kind of a privilege for the chief officer.

They smile, Pause.

TOM: Why didn't you call me? You should have known I'd be able to help.

BLUE: I didn't want you to.

TOM: *(Beat)* I remember we were close.

Beat.

BLUE: Are we finished? Remember you can only hold me for 24 hours.

TOM: If we don't charge you. Yes. *(Points to the bottle)* Have some water.

BLUE: I'm fine.

TOM: Have some.

Beat. BLUE drinks the water.

TOM: I always wonder why it gets to be like this. *(Beat)* Your mum was a busy woman. So I spent most of my free time with you and your sister, we used to tell each other everything. We didn't have any secrets.

BLUE: Stop.

TOM: And you were the black sheep. Not like your sister, she's more independent; I don't have to worry about her because she's always doing something. But you are not. It's like in careless, I will lose you forever. *(Beat)* You remind me of my own childhood.

Beat.

TOM: I told you I never got along with my old man. *(Beat)* A veteran, a tough big quiet man, and he loved his job with everything he had. He even had an arsenal of all kinds of military supplies. When I was admitted to the military school he said that was the proudest day of his life.

BLUE: But you hated that job.

TOM: Yes, but I pretended, just to make him happy. Even though he was a shit father, rarely at home, bad temper, always quarrelling with my mum, and sometime hitting people. Still, he is the navy hero I worshipped. *(Beat)* Until my mum disappeared with all their savings. He shut himself down with alcohol, stopped talking. And I didn't know how to face him either; things got worse and worse, and sometimes I felt I couldn't recognize this drunk, sloppy fat ass anymore.

And I was scared because the only thing I felt for him was/

BLUE: Nothing.

TOM: Yeah. Nothing. *(Beat)* One day I woke up in the middle of night. I saw him sitting there, holding a rifle under his chin. It's the first time I ever saw a real rifle, and it looked very, very unreal.

BLUE: What did you do?

TOM: I didn't know what to do. So I just turned over, and went into the toilet to pee. And I heard him cry. Like a hopeless child. *(Beat)* You know what was happened leading up to that night? *(Beat)* Nothing. He seemed completely normal but suddenly, just like that. *(Snap-finger)* He lost it.

Beat.

BLUE: Why are you telling me this?

TOM: I'm afraid you are going to lose it someday. I just don't know when.

Beat.

TOM: I tried to be a better father.

BLUE: I know. *(Beat)* But it didn't work.

TOM: I tried.

BLUE: Of course, but that doesn't make it any fucking better.

BLUE drinks all the water in front of him. Beat. TOM turns off the recorder and puts it down.

TOM: I am already taking care of everything, there will be no record. You can leave now.

BLUE leaves, TOM stops him as he is leaving and puts a note in BLUE's pocket.

TOM: Anytime. If you need someone to talk to.

BLUE: We'll see.

TOM: I miss you, son.

BLUE: No you don't. You only want you to think you do.

Blackout.

FIVE

In the hall of the governmental building, LILIAN and a security officer are waiting for the elevator. There are sirens and shouts from afar.

SECURITY: This way, councilor.

LILIAN: What's happening?

SECURITY: Some protesters have occupied the conference chamber. We are ordered to escort all officials in this building out.

LILIAN: Protesters? How many?

SECURITY: We are not sure yet. The preliminary estimate exceeds hundreds now, we don't know if there's any organization backing them up.

LILIAN: It's ridiculous, why didn't you just round them up and kick them out?

SECURITY: Many media have arrived too. Chairman DAVE ordered that no more

force be used against them.

LILIAN: Hundreds? How did they get in?

The elevator comes. MARK is in there. SECURITY pushes LILIAN in.

SECURITY: Councillor, MARK will escort you out from the secret safe passage. You should not be involved in this. (To MARK) Take her out from the emergency lane.

The elevator door closes. SECURITY leaves.

LILIAN takes out a cigarette, starts smoking. Beat.

LILIAN: Hello, MARK.

MARK: Hi, LI. I mean councillor.

LILIAN: It's been a while. Have you gotten used to everything?

MARK: Yeah. (Beat) I tried to ring a couple times, but they said you were off the office.

LILIAN: You're soaked. Is it raining?

MARK: Soaked. Yeah. No, the police were using water hoses to stop people from rushing in.

LILIAN: (Beat) Like the old days.

MARK: Yeah. It is.

LILIAN: What did you ring me for?

MARK: To say thanks. (Beat) Sometime it's hard for people with a record.

LILIAN: It is always hard.

LILIAN's phone rings.

LILIAN: (*Answers the phone*) I'm fine. They will pick me up and drive me home soon. How does it happened? (*Beat*) I know it's too late now. (*Beat*) Take care of yourself. (*Beat*) I want to see you soon too. Bye, love. (*Hang up, takes a deep breath*)

MARK: It sounds like he is very nice to you.

LILIAN: Who?

MARK: Your husband.

LILIAN: Who told you that's my husband? (*Smile*) Doesn't your wife treat you well?

MARK: Sure she would, but I just haven't found her yet.

LILIAN: Ha, ha.

LILIAN slightly coughs.

MARK: I never knew you smoke.

LILIAN: A new habit. (*Hands cigarette over*) Want some?

MARK: I quit.

LILIAN: I used to think smoking was cool because of you. (*Beat*) You have changed.

MARK: (*Beat*) Everything changed after I came out, the world was a totally different place.

LILIAN: Just like the girl who once chased you is suddenly the city councillor and running for the mayor now.

MARK: You are doing very well.

LILIAN: It cost a lot. (*Beat*) This was our dream, remember? We always talked about this moment. (*Put her fingers close to his face*) This close, I'm making the dream come true.

The elevator stops, LILIAN presses the close door button.

LILIAN: Have a smoke, talk with me like we used to.

MARK: But there's...

LILIAN: It's safe in here.

Beat.

MARK: I heard that you are too busy to have time to go home.

LILIAN: Yes, it's always busy.

MARK: So what are you busy with today?

LILIAN: Take a guess?

MARK: I don't know, related to the campaign?

LILIAN: Yeah, pretty much. There is a foreign company that wants the contract for the subway maintenance for the entire capital. You know how broke the whole system is? And the price they proposed means we can't refuse it; but the local workers and companies of course are opposed and even proposed to strike. So the city government came forward to coordinate, I need to convince the unions to cooperate. You can't believe how stubborn they are.

MARK: Because that means many workers will lose their jobs, how can you convince them?

LILIAN: Be more stubborn than them. *(Smile)* Somebody needs to make sure the subway will still be working tomorrow.

MARK: Otherwise it will be the end of the world

Beat.

LILIAN: (*Claps*) Here it comes. I was wrong, you haven't changed at all.

MARK: What?

LILIAN: I knew you'd be like this.

MARK: Like what?

LILIAN: You'd sneer. You think I'm doing shit out of pity.

MARK: No I don't/

LILIAN: And because you care about like four hundred workers' rights, you will give up the right of all the citizens in the capital to get to work on time. You don't see how important it is, for some of them to make sure they get the subway on track.

MARK: Don't you think the bigger question is not about getting working on time?

LILIAN: Here we go again, the bigger question talk.

MARK: What does that mean?

LILIAN: You always think there's a bigger question. So you despise all of the smaller problems. Just like we used to firmly believe that liberation is the perfect answer for everything. But we are still dealing with the consequences. Social disintegration, national identity falling apart, welfare services overstretched; I visited a young woman at the halfway house yesterday. She had five children with five different fathers, all relying on charity. And she thinks that's her liberal right, so the rest of us have to take care of her kids' diapers, or they will starve or drown in their shit.

LILIAN's phone ringing, she looks at it and turns it off.

LILIAN: I got this position today because I started to do pity shit. And I actually make peoples live better. *(Beat)* And what did you do, MARK? What did you ever do? Talk, march, protest, against this, overthrow that, get wasted and make love with every girl who worshiped you? Tell me one concrete thing you did.

Beat.

LILIAN: That's what I expected.

MARK: *(Beat)* I never knew that you hate me.

LILIAN: I don't hate you. *(Beat)* I worshipped you when we were young. I'm kind of mad at you because, you can't imagine how hard that was for a single mother during that time. But I thank you for what you had taught me.

Beat.

LILIAN: That's why I am willing to arrange this job for you. *(Beat)* I should go. It's nice to talk to you.

LILIAN puts the cigarette in MARK's hand.

LILIAN: Just start with some smaller things this time, okay?

LILIAN leaves, MARK takes the cigarette.

Blackout.

SIX

In the dark, there are sounds of punching, moaning.

In a basement, A MAN tied up with a black cloth around his head lies on the floor.

Two men drag him to sit on a chair. DOG sits in front of him, loosen the cloth.

DOG: Hello, Johnson. We have some questions for you.

MAN: Who's Johnson? This must be a huge mistake.

DOG: Come on, John, we know who you are. I only need you to answer some of my questions. And I need you to promise that you will be very honest. Do you understand me, John?

MAN: I don't know what you're talking about, my name is Tim...

DOG stops him by putting a hammer against the Man's lips.

DOG: Listen, shh-shh. *(Beat)* I'll call you John anyway, it suits you better. *(Beat)* And you shouldn't interrupt me again, it's rude. You don't like to be interrupted, right?

MAN nods.

DOG: So, where is it? Johnny, tell me.

DOG moves the hammer away.

MAN: I... I don't...

DOG: Hey, hey, don't lie to me. Not like you, I'm pretty good at my job. *(Beat)* As far

as I know, we pay you well, very well, to deliver our stuff to the location we asked. And the only simple thing you need to do, is to do it on time, and everybody is happy. *(Beat)* It's sad. We once believed in people, men trusted each other by simply shaking hands, with respect. But now, so disappointed. Tell me John, where's our stuff?

MAN: I don't know, I'm just a driver, I never touch your stuff/

DOG: John, John, Johnny, *(Take out a small bag of capsule pills)* Guess where did we find these in your car? I said we're professional. We know you've been stealing our shit. You thought that no one ever notice you because you just stealing such a little bit, and no one will ever know, because you're so the smartest ass in the universe. But you're wrong, it's because we let you so.

DOG hits the MAN with the hammer.

DOG: So, think carefully. Now.

The two men cover up the MAN's face with the black cloth again, and continually pour water on his face. The MAN struggles. Just before he chokes, Dog stops his men and removes the cloth.

MAN: *(Cough)* Oh God, oh God save me...

DOG: You are religious. Damn, a Christian?

MAN: Yes, yes I am.

DOG: I like religious people. They believe in something invisible, just like blind people. *(Touching the man's eyes)* I like blind people, they need our stuff most. *(Beat)* Finish your praying.

MAN: What?

DOG: I say finish your praying. If God knows what going to happen on you, I want to see what will he do. *(Beat)* Promise me you won't wet your pants, Johnny, it annoys me every time.

Dog puts the cloth on the MAN's face again.

MAN: Wait, please... I'll tell you, there's another guy, another deliveror, I just afraid of something went wrong, so I gave those to him... And he said he had to go to the neighborhood to run an order first, and then I couldn't reach him anymore ...
(Crying) I'm sorry, I only took a little bit, only a little... I didn't do it on purpose, I was scared... I'm really really sorry...

DOG: *(Beat, pat Tim gently on his face)* You know what, John. I believe you're. I really do. And I'm sorry too. I'm not doing this on purpose either.

DOG covers the MAN's head. And brutally smashes his head with the hammer.

Blackout.

SEVEN

In the lobby from the first scene, it's dark. Protesters use chairs like a blockade or roadblock to block the meeting room. Sounds of like a celebratory party emerge from the room: the sound of a loud voice and a huge noise together with loud music. MARK holds a cigarette and stands by the broken window. GREEN shows up with a beer; she's a little bit drunk and starts to take off her skirt.

MARK: Hey. Just want you know someone's here.

GREEN: You again. *(Takes off her skirt, brushes it)* Someone spit on my skirt. *(Beat)*

You're still here? I thought you had left.

MARK: It's my job to be here.

GREEN: They pay you to stay?

MARK: I volunteered. Live in the security room. Since you guys blocked the exit, I didn't really have other place to go.

GREEN: So are you off work now?

MARK: I suppose so.

GREEN: Let's have a beer. *(Passes MARK the beer)*

MARK drinks. GREEN puts her skirt on again.

MARK: It's like you're having a party?

GREEN: They want to celebrate that the police retreated. It's a victory.

MARK: Victory? *(Beat)* Have you seen that there is a dead mouse hanging outside at the front door? Why would someone do that?

GREEN: Well, some of them caught a mouse in the room where they all were. And

after a discussion they thought that a fat rat was the right symbol for a rotten bureaucracy, so they sentenced it to death.

MARK: By hanging?

GREEN: They actually voted: hang, drown, or burn.

MARK: Wow, it feels very medieval.

Beat.

MARK: So how long will this last?

GREEN: It depends on what the government answers. These are actually caused by them and also their responsibility to end it. *(Beat)* And it takes time to make things right. Don't you think? *(Looks at Chris's picture)* Like what she did.

MARK: Just hope it won't take that long. I like this job.

GREEN: *(Smile)* I'm glad you didn't just mop it up.

MARK: Yeh. *(Beat)* But I wish someone had locked this window in the beginning.

They look at the window, laugh.

GREEN: I'm GREEN. What should I call you?

MARK: MARK.

GREEN: Doesn't your family worry if you don't go home, MARK?

MARK: Don't you?

GREEN: Fair question. *(Takes the beer, and drinks)* I'm living with my brother now, he just sent me a text saying that he's been released.

MAKR: Released?

GREEN: He came to visit the camp this morning and was accidentally caught by the

police. Very unlucky dude. What about your family?

MARK: My parents passed away years ago, and I don't have anyone else left.

GREEN: You are not married?

MARK: It's complicated. *(Beat)* My fiancée left when I was in jail.

GREEN: What happened?

MARK: It's like... I was young and stupid and got myself locked up in prison. And the times were different; the government was a dictatorial one, full of assholes.

GREEN: It still the same.

MARK: I was not allowed to write anyone letters or communicate with the outside, so maybe she got scared and married someone else.

GREEN: But it still/

MARK: No, there's nothing to blame her for. You couldn't ask her to wait. *(Beat)*

After couple years, they gave me some change and told me: you can make phone calls now. So I called home and found out that both of my parents are passed away. I hold the other coins they gave, had no one to call. It's desperate. *(Beat)*

After I was released. I went to the grave of my parents. The funny thing is I couldn't recognize the pictures on the tombstones, it was like I couldn't remember what my parents looked like; and what life we had before. It's like a hole had grown in my memory. It broke me. Our old house was sold to a strange family, and I beg them to let me to find if anything was left. I searched like a crazy, and just before they couldn't endure but call the police, finally, I found this picture.

MARK takes a picture out of his pocket.

MARK: It's a picture of my first day of university. And there are my parents, that's how they look. I bring this with me every day, so I will never forget.

GREEN carefully takes the picture and looks at it.

GREEN: They look happy.

MARK: *(Takes the photo back)* Sorry, I'm wasting lots of your time. Not want to ruin your mood, you should go back to the party.

GREEN: I prefer to be here. You are too lonely to be here alone. *(Opens her arms)*
Come here.

Beat. They hug.

MARK: It's really really nice.

GREEN: I told you so.

CHERRY and BILLY happily rush over; they're both very drunk.

BILLY: Here you are. Why are you guys hiding here?

CHERRY: Hellooo, Who is that? *(To GREEN)* You little little slut--

GREEN: Let me make some introductions: CHERRY and BILLY, they are my best mates. This is MARK, he works here. *(Beat)* He is my friend.

CHERRY: Hello. I like your uniform.

MARK: Nice to meet you too.

BILLY: So why don't you join the party? We are having fun, we can introduce you to our people.

MARK: Thanks, but I'm too old for crowds.

BILLY: Come on, celebrate with us for this great victory. We are very tolerant of the

surrenders, most of us, at least.

GREEN: Stop BILLY, you sound like an idiot.

BILLY: No, I'm not. You haven't seen it yet? (*Shows GREEN his phone*) See, we are on the front pages everywhere! All the media are reporting us, and look at the click volumes, we are famous!

CHERRY: ANDY has been invited to three different television shows already.

BILLY: Hear this! (*Plays a video on his phone*)

Video: ... The presidential speaker has responded to today's student occupation movement, he emphasizes there should be no tolerance for illegal protests. However with the subsequent videos of serious physical conflict between students and the police, the public have overwhelmingly expressed sympathy and support for the students, forcing the government to negotiate with the representatives of the youth movement for a win-win solution...

BILLY: Did you hear that! They are going to give in. We did it.

CHERRY: Hooray!

BILLY and CHERRY cheer with each other. GREEN is still reading news on the phone.

MARK: You don't seem happy.

GREEN: Some of them are implying that we are terrorists.

MARK: How?

GREEN: They say the police suspect everything was planned beforehand, that we set the fires on purpose to draw attention, and then seized the opportunity to occupy the parliament building.

BILLY: They are making shit up. That's all. Who cares about what they say/

GREEN: It will be confusing, people won't know what our real intentions are. We are not terrorists. None of this was on purpose and we never set any fires. How did ANDY respond to this?

BILLY: (*Beat*) He didn't. He thinks people like this kind of conspiracy theory, and we need the attention, more than ever. People are sympathizing with us now, so it might become a great bargaining chips for our negotiations.

CHERRY: And nobody really got hurt.

GREEN: It still doesn't make it right.

CHERRY: You really should stop worrying now. Come here. (*Shows GREEN the backpack*) Here's something sweet for you~

GREEN: (*Grab the pack*) What the...

CHERRY: Come on, you are only allowed to take one, or two?

GREEN: Are you out of your mind? What are you doing?

BILLY and CHERRY look at each other, giggling.

GREEN: (*Looking at the backpack*) How is there only half left? Don't tell me it's Andy.

BILLY: ANDY thinks it's a nice reward. We were fighting for so long, people should enjoy today's victory. And it really make you feel much better.

GREEN: (*To CHERRY*) We swear we're not going to use it.

CHERRY: I'm only taking a little bit for fun. It's not serious.

GREEN: I'm going to find Andy.

CHERRY: (*Hugs GREEN*) Why are you mad? It's no big deal. It just helps you really relax. We want to feel free, I need to feel free.

GREEN: You might pee on yourself any time now. Like a dog, it is not free at all/

CHERRY: No, no, it's something more, something better. (*To GREEN*) It is the first time I feel totally released after we started this protest, like I've finally been freed. Whenever I close my eyes, I can see myself flowing on the sky. Travel through time and spaces to witness so many of the atrocities that have happened. I can fly to a concentration camp in Xinjiang and see an Islamic girl being dragged outside the dormitory to be raped in the middle of the night; can fly to the primary school in the battlefield in Syria, to see those scorched little hands and feet; can fly to New York to witness a homeless who wanted to pick up food from trash cans and were shot dead by the shop owner. From the ape using its sticks to break the heads of attacking groups, to whole tribes of women being raped and murdered. People never stop hurting others. It's the only way stronger species make themselves grow. I know it sounds cruel, and it's cruel. The world itself is cruel. The planet is merciless. The sun is a fatal fireball. And no one can protect us in this lonely universe, so we can never be happy. But not now, now I feel safe. We are floating and flowing on this holy land of happiness. I can smile. This is the first time in my life, for so long, I feel I like myself.

CHERRY covered her mouth and vomited, and she ran away.

GREEN looks at BILLY.

GREEN: And you call this better?

BILLY: Maybe she took a little too much.

There is a phone ringing comes from the backpack.

GREEN reaches in and takes out a mobile phone.

BILLY: ANDY says we should/

GREEN: Fuck ANDY. (*Picks the phone up*) Hello? (*Beat*) I'm not him, but I can return them to you. (*Beat*) Okay, I see. (*Hang up the phone and look at MARK*) He says if I don't return these things for my brother now, he seems to be in great trouble. Can you help me?

BILLY: You want to go out now? How?

Beat. MARK takes out the emergency access key from his pocket.

MARK: I know a way.

GREEN: (*Looks at MARK, then at BILLY*) Look after her, don't let her choke herself.

BILLY nods. GREEN leaves with MARK.

CHERRY: (*Yells from afar*) This is the happiest day ever.

Blackout.

EIGHT

In a dining room, there are many dishes on the table with candles and wine.

TOM wears an apron and covers LILIAN's eyes from behind.

TOM: *(Open his hand)* Surprise, Congratulations.

LILIAN: What are you doing?

TOM: Nothing, it's for our anniversary

LILIAN: It's not our anniversary, are you mad?

TOM: Everyday is an anniversary. *(Opens the wine, pouring two cups)* Cheers.

LILIAN: Is this what you called me back for?

TOM: I want to celebrate with you, for winning the primary.

LILIAN: I haven't won yet.

TOM: The polls say you have.

LILIAN: It's not the final result. There're still many things that can go wrong.

TOM: You are too busy, we haven't had dinner together in such a long time.

LILIAN: Babe, you know what a campaign like/

TOM: I know it too well.

LILIAN: Aren't you busy dealing with those protesters and their occupation? I heard
that the police believe there is a big conspiracy behind it; are you sure it's a good
time for us to relax? *(Beat, notice TOM looks at her)* What?

TOM: I just memorise the girl I met twenty years ago, wearing a red sweater, with a
bandana tied around her head, leading the marching crowd. Always on the front
lines, fighting for something she want to change.

LILIAN: *(Clinks her glass with TOM)* And the small soldier become the vice
commander of National Security Agency now.

TOM: (*Beat*) I remember that was the first year I served on the emergency team,
ordering those marching students to disperse. And you were singing the song--

LILIAN: A Japanese ballad. (*Humming the rhythm*) It's a song the old revolutionaries
used to sing before receiving the death penalty.

TOM: Really?

LILIAN: It's like a spiritual symbol we inherited.

TOM: Yeah, and I saw you singing in the crowd with other students. Not afraid of us
one bit...singing for the liberation of our country/

LILIAN: I was so scared. You were very mean, with your poker face telling us that we
were not allowed to sing in the street.

TOM: Do you remember what you said? You said you were only singing. Then you
questioned me, are you that kind of cop who puts an innocent in prison just because
the government told you to do it?

LILIAN: And you handcuffed me and took me back to the station. (*Beat*) What
happened?

TOM: I met BLUE today, at the station.

Beat. LILIAN finished the whole glass.

LILIAN: Oh, then?

TOM: He joined in the protesting, and had been arrested; isn't it funny, he's just like
you. (*Beat*) I released him with no record.

LILIAN: It must be his sister. Anyway, it's nice for him to get out of his tiny room to
face the world. (*Beat*) Anything else?

TOM: (*Beat*) No, that's all.

LILIAN's phone rings, she looks at it.

TOM: Don't tell me you're leaving now.

LILIAN: Not that look, it's an emergency. I need to go.

TOM: Who's calling?

LILIAN: DAVE. He says the mayor wants me to go to a party.

TOM: Now?

LILIAN: It's a kind of private one. He wants to introduce me some important contacts.

TOM: Maybe I should go with you.

LILIAN: You don't like parties.

TOM: I don't. *(Beat)* I've never understood why people enjoy them.

LILIAN: The wine's good.

TOM: Dave, is he the guy you said tried to date you once?

LILIAN: Yes, when we were both practice assistants. *(Beat)* He is married now.

TOM: That doesn't mean anything; you can divorce whenever you want these days.

LILIAN: Don't be ridiculous. People like us never consider divorce. We don't take ourselves that seriously. *(Smiles, kisses TOM)* I promise. After this is all over, we can have a really nice vacation for just the two of us. Wherever, whatever you want.

TOM: I want to go to a hot spring. I know a very nice one, private and decent.

LILIAN: Hot spring it is.

LILIAN wearing a coat, about to stand up.

TOM: Wait, just a few minutes. *(Goes and gets a plate out)* I baked your favorite lemon pie. They won't be serving lemon pie at that party.

LILIAN: I can't. The pie isn't going anywhere.

TOM: Neither DAVE.

TOM cuts a piece of pie, and puts it in front of LILIAN.

LILIAN stands up.

LILIAN: Save some for me.

LILIAN leaves. TOM sits at the table. He looks at the lemon pie, and puts some into his mouth, slowly at first, then faster and faster until finally he throws it away.

Blackout.

NINE

In the protesters' camp, on the square in front of the parliament building.

BLUE comes in, he sees MARK sitting there.

BLUE: Excuse me. Did you see a girl with green hair? I'm looking for my sister.

MARK: BLUE, right? She asked me to wait for you here.

BLUE: Do I know you? Where is she?

MARK: She got a call and had to go return some stuff urgently; she didn't want you worry. She said she will be back soon.

BLUE: Where did she go?

MARK: I don't know.

BLUE sits. Beat.

BLUE: (*Beat*) You two aren't together, right?

MARK: What? No, no, we just met.

BLUE: Oh, sorry, just, you are her type.

MARK: What type?

BLUE: A special type. How old are you anyway?

MARK: Forty-six.

BLUE: That's not too old. Not like forty-eight. (*Beat*) Are you an alcoholic?

MARK: No, I don't drink

BLUE: Drugs?

MARK: What? No.

BLUE: You don't look like a violent person, why are you still single?

MARK: I, I just ... We are not together.

BLUE looks at MARK, and laughs.

BLUE: I'm not trying to be rude, I just want to protect my sister. She is an idiot when
it comes to finding men.

MARK: She said you live together, what about your parents?

BLUE: (*Beat*) We're not close to them. GREEN didn't tell you why?

MARK: No, and you don't have to if it makes you uncomfortable.

Beat.

BLUE: Are you close with your parents?

MARK: I once do.

BLUE: I never had a father. And my mum was always working. I can even count the number of meals we ate together.

MARK: Life is hard for a single mom.

BLUE: Yeah, it must be. Especially when you have a couple of children. She rarely talks or looks at us, everytime she brought her boyfriend home, she hid us upstairs. And we knew, from someone that young, we knew we should not be annoying.

MARK: You have taken care of each other since then.

BLUE: Yeah, only us. And when she announced she was going to remarry. We were so exciting.

MARK: You want a complete family.

BLUE: Not even have to be a nice one. (*Beat*) When She introduced us to our stepdad, the first impression was great. He was a big, strong, and quiet man, even a little shy. He's a policeman.

MARK: What did he do to you?

BLUE: He was really great, teaching me football, taking us to the pool, driving us to school... He did all the things that dad should do, and treats us more like our real families. It was all so great.

Beat.

But things changed when I turned fourteen. One day, when I was taking a shower. He came in. He said we can take the shower together.

MARK: Uh huh.

BLUE: Even though I was young, I knew something wasn't right. So after the shower, I went to my mother. I told her: He kisses me and rubbed my penis. But she didn't believe me. She thought I was jealous, and lying to attract more attention. She said

she will talk to him, but she never did.

MARK: Oh.

BLUE: So the things just got worse. Mum got bigger job at her party, and started to travel around. When she was away, dad comes into my room at night. After several times, I couldn't stand it anymore. I went to her again. But she still didn't believe me. She called me a liar, and said I was making it up because I want to ruin her life again. (*Beat*) I never forget that look in her eyes, hateful and resentful and she says: I wish you had never been born. And I'm suddenly full of rage. I mean, I fucking hated her. And I lost control.

MARK: What did you do?

BLUE: I jumped on the table and shouted: Listen, your husband fucks me, he's my stepdad and he fucked me. And you're my mother, you should do something, shoot him up with something, cut something off, or electrify the pervert. (*Beat*) Or you can at least trust me, because there will be no one there if you don't.

Beat.

BLUE: She told others that I had depression and sent me for treatment. All the expert doctors thought I was lying; so the juvenile court wouldn't accept my case; they all told me I was wrong. Even now, I'm not confident about what really happened. Sometimes I think maybe I did make up the story that he raped me in order to get more attention from her.

Beat.

BLUE: Only GREEN believes me. During the time in the hospital, she visited me

every week, and after that, she helped me leave our home. She saved some money by selling things online and rented a flat for both of us.

MARK: *(Beat)* I'm sorry to hear that, kid.

BLUE: I don't need sorry. Sorry never saved anything.

MARK: So what do you need?

BLUE: You could ask me how my day was.

MARK: *(Does so)* How was your day?

BLUE: It sucks, but I'm glad somebody cares.

BLUE's phone rings.

BLUE: It's GREEN. *(Pick up the phone)* Hey, where are you? Hello?

Blackout.

TEN

In a basement, GREEN's head is covered, hands tied to a chair; like the Man from Scene 6. Two men are sitting beside her and watching the news on TV: It shows a bombed city on fire, masked men executing people, and hanging well-dressed children.

TV: ... This morning, the rebel forces took control of the Capital and executed a number of government officials and the King. A few hours ago, they openly hanged all of the members of the royal family. Local people say that it was the most horrible picture ever seen in the hundred year history of this city...

MEN A: *(Looking at the TV)* They hang kids. It's fucking brutal.

MEN B: How'd you know?

MEN A: Those are kids.

MEN B: Royal kids.

MEN A: What kinds of people do that?

MEN B: Those who don't want to have a king anymore.

DOG comes in with the backpack, he wears a dignified suit. The two men turn off the TV. DOG sits down in front of GREEN and uncovers her mask.

DOG: Hello, GREEN. We talked before. Sorry about the rope, mask, all this shit. We need to be careful, you know.

GREEN: Why did you bring me here, I just wanted to return the bag to its owner.

DOG: Which you just did, but not entirely. About half of it is gone; don't you have anything to tell me?

GREEN Shakes head

DOG: People always do this. I hate it.

GREEN: What?

DOG: Playing innocent. It makes me feel like I'm the bad person.

GREEN: What do you want?

DOG: OK, listen. Today is actually a very important day for my daughter and I'm still here. So let's make it quick. *(Pick up the pack)* Where did you get this?

GREEN: I picked it from a parking lot; and maybe someone had stolen some of it

before me, I don't know.

DOG: So it's not you.

GREEN: No.

DOG: And you are just an innocent girl who was passing by and picked this up. You know what's in there?

GREEN: *(Beat)* I know.

DOG: Did you tried it? I can promise you, it's pharmaceutical grade and it's the best you can get in this country.

GREEN: I don't use drugs.

DOG: It's a pity that you don't know what you missed. *(Looking at his watch)* Well, it's time to start.

The two men turn on the TV, it shows a schoolgirl playing violin, she plays well. DOG listens to it. GREEN wanted to talk but was interrupted by DOG's gestures, he listened intently.

DOG: It's beautiful, isn't it? It makes you remember something we've lost.

Something beautiful that you lost but forgot that you had ever had.

DOG wipes his eyes.

DOG: I sent her to the best music school in the country. The teacher said her talent is a gift, a gift from God. And I believe that's right, because it can't be from me, or her mum. Where else can it come from, eh? A small girl like that, doesn't know anything, picks up a bit of wood and string and makes you weep.

The schoolgirl finishes her performance. DOG claps his hands.

DOG: What do you think?

GREEN: She's really good, talented.

DOG: No only that. There is effort, my effort. *(Beat)* At the end of the day, before beauty, before God, before practice, peel them all away and what is there? Hey, I'm asking you. *(Beat)* It's this. *(Takes one small bag of drugs from the backpack)* We are the number one in this business. That's how I got this suit and my girl's tuition. And it's hard, it's always hard to be the best; which is why I need rules to make sure everything is on track. *(Beat)* Once my girl picked a kitten. She likes to play with it, and keep skipping her class. Her teacher told me she got regressed. I warned her, but she didn't listen. So I smashed the little cat on the floor in front of her face, and told her to clean it up. I want her to learn a lesson that you can't escape responsibility if you want to be good; that's why we need to have rules.

DOG changes the TV, to a video shows him hitting the MAN with a hammer, the MAN is crying and begging him to stop.

DOG: This is the one who lost our stuff. Because of him, I have no way to deliver on time, and my reputation gets hurt. I trust him once and he failed me. And I can't be the best if my clients don't trust me. Trust is like a pane of glass. When it's clean you hardly know it's there. Only by smash it, and you're cut to shreds. The cold comes in, such cold. And I have to let my people remember. *(Beat)* I hate violence. But sometimes it's necessary. It changes things. Because people are always greedy, selfish, and full of lies; I can't trust anyone anymore, but I can trust violence. *(Beat)* If I don't do this, my business will be eliminated sooner or later by my competitors.

I won't let their selfishness or lies destroy the life I've made for my daughter.

Which is why I can't let people FUCK ME AROUND, you understand?

DOG turns off the TV.

DOG: So now, it's about you.

GREEN: I'm sorry. I will pay for your loss.

DOG: Good, that's the spirit. You know how much loss you caused, Love? (*GREEN shakes head again*) Yeah, I think so. How much?

MAN A: About thirty grand.

DOG: Not much, easy, right? (*Beat*) Fifty grand can save everything.

GREEN: He says thirty/

DOG: Thirty, fifty, what's the difference? Money is not a problem for a girl like you.

Just like my father taught me, you can buy the world with a peso if you know who's selling it. (*Beat*) You will have a week.

GREEN: A week?

DOG: That means seven days. Long enough for God to create this world.

GREEN: (*Beat*) I will find a way. Can I go now?

DOG: Just a little thing left. In order to make sure you won't do anything stupid, and also as a reward for you bring my stuff back. (*Takes out some pills*) I will give you a free treat.

Two men grab GREEN, and DOG held her neck and forced her to swallow. GREEN struggles but in vain.

DOG: Shhh... easy, it's fine. It may be a bit strong for the first time, but who knows,

(Touches GREEN's face) Maybe you will like it.

GREEN befuddled.

Blackout.

ELEVEN

In a dark prison cell, GREEN and two other prisoners, YOUTH and CHRIS are locked up together. CHRIS hums the Japanese ballad 'Song of the covered wagon' from scene 8. YOUTH joins her. GREEN suddenly shaking, twitching, and screaming as in the last scene.

In this scene, the person playing CHRIS is the same as LILIAN; YOUTH as BLUE; MAN as MARK; JAILOR as TOM. Their costumes are different from previous times.

CHRIS: *(Hugs GREEN and comforts her)* Hey, it's OK, it's OK now.

YOUTH: What's wrong with her?

CHRIS: She's still in fever. Help me here, the foaming at her mouth, she might choke herself.

They loosen GREEN's clothes, and lie her down. CHRIS helps clean her vomit and GREEN is breathing loudly but gradually calms down.

GREEN: *(Hoarse)* Mum?

YOUTH: She's saying something.

CHRIS: She is mumbling. *(To GREEN)* Poor kid, she wants to find her mum.

YOUTH: Do you think it's a good time to babysit someone we don't even know?

CHRIS: Hand me some water.

YOUTH: What's the point?

CHRIS: We are not animals. (*To GREEN*) Are you hurt? Have some water.

GREEN cannot speak, only makes a gasping sound.

CHRIS: Calm down, calm down, catch your breath, it is OK now.

YOUTH: Really? (*Beat*) I can't worried about others now. I can't stop thinking about what will happen to us. They say the verdict has come down, and they plan to push all the blame on us. (*Beat*) We should run. When we saw them arresting people we say that they have guns. We have nothing.

CHRIS: Where can we go? And what do you think will happen on those who kindly accepted us, and their families, they are innocent people.

YOUTH: Are we not? (*Beat*) I've got family too.

Beat.

CHRIS: We are doing the right thing.

YOUTH: Yeh? I only know we're all going to die soon, like those who were killed in the square. Like a dead mouse, meaningless, not even making a squeak. Die for nothing. (*Beat*) You told me you needed people, but didn't say you needed heroes. I'm not a hero, not even close. I did what you told me to because I believed in you. Never knew this would happen. I didn't even know what I did was wrong.

Beat.

CHRIS: And I'm with you. Believe me, we did nothing wrong.

YOUTH: *(Beat)* Sorry. I'm scared... I miss my parents. They said we should write our name on the socks, so they can recognise... *(Sigh)* Why am I doing this, it just makes everything harder/

CHRIS: *(Holds YOUTH in her arms)* You're the bravest kid I ever knew. Even if we lose now, as long as others don't give up. There'll be one day, with a bit of luck the world we want will come into being, all the free people will be proud of you and remember you as a hero. Believe me. It's not meaningless, we are not dying for nothing.

JAILOR brings MAN in. MAN's shirt is covered with blood.

JAILOR: *(To YOUTH)* It's your turn.

YOUTH glancest at CHRIS, and was taken away. CHRIS comes close to MAN.

Beat.

CHRIS: Did you?

MAN: I said nothing. *(Beat)* They used everything. Cigarette, pliers, even pull out my teeth. For not a thing. *(Beat)* You trust me?

CHRIS: I do. *(MAN groans. CHRIS comforts him)* Do you regret?

MAN: I wouldn't if we can stop this happening ever again.

There is the cry of YOUTH and the laughter of those men. CHRIS tries to cover her ears.

MAN: CHRIS, listen. They will break you. They know you are the weakest, so they leave you till the end. And for what they want to know, it will be the worst of what they got, that will be hard.

CHRIS: I won't betray.

MAN: I know, but for how long? *(the scream of YOUTH comes again)* Come over and untie my belt. Use the method I taught you. *(Beat)* It will make it easier.

CHRIS hesitates for a while, then finally decided to untie the MAN's belt. They look at each other.

MAN: Meet me in a better place next time.

There is a loud noise outside. The JAILOR and several soldiers come, he points at MAN, they blindfolded and dragged him out. The JAILOR left alone, he takes out a box of cigarette.

JAILOR: Want some smoke?

CHRIS shakes her head.

JAILOR: The young man just died. *(Beat)* It's a pity that he is still so young.

JAILOR puts a paper and pen in front of CHRIS.

JAILOR: We want you to sign.

CHRIS: What does it say?

JAILOR: Does it matter? *(Beat)* It says you confess that all the illegal protests were led by these two; you confess to having plotted treason; now they have committed suicide because of their guilt, and you are willing to testify.

CHRIS: What happens if I refuse?

Beat, JAILOR comes near in front of CHRIS.

JAILOR: I'm a soldier for all my life. I was trained to die for the country when I was sixteen. And that's what my life for.

CHRIS: I thought you were training to protect people.

JAILOR: And that's exactly what I'm doing. *(Beat)* In the last war, I lost all my families. I witnessed the enemy troops raped my sisters on the street. And they lock the whole village in a warehouse, set fire on it, to save bullets. That's the war we were fighting against evil. *(Beat)* Being a protector can't be only nice and gentle. There's bound to be some bad bits.

CHRIS: Like what you're going to do to me?

Beat. Gunfire from outside.

JAILOR: *(Looks his watch)* We just executed your friend. And from now on, if you still won't cooperate, we will shoot another people from the village that covered your guys every 15 minutes. : *(Looks his watch)*

Beat.

CHRIS: I will sign. *(Beat)* Only one condition, can you let me smoke this cigarette

alone, just five minutes.

JAILOR: (*Looks at CHRIS. Smiles*) Sure.

JAILOR gives cigarette and lighter to CHRIS.

JAILOR: Hope you understand. It's nothing personal. I don't like what they did to your people. (*Beat*) Sorry it has to be like this.

JAILOR leaves. CHRIS comes to GREEN, checks if she's alright. Then she takes out MAN's belt, makes it into a loop, and hangs it from the handle of the prison door. CHRIS puts her neck in. She shudders in fear, so she starts to hum the ballad, her voice gradually stabilized.

GREEN: Mum... are you there?

CHRIS: Yes sweetheart.

GREEN: It's like I'm dreaming.

CHRIS: What's your dream about?

GREEN: It's, it's like I travel to a world long and long after this one, everything was changed... everything is different, tall buildings are everywhere in the city, no more famine, no more war, people live a wealthy life, and we have law to protect the poor...

CHRIS: That sounds great. (*Beat*) There must be no more police arrest people for no reason, no soldiers shooting unarmed people.

GREEN: Yes, it is.

CHRIS: So we are allowed to say anything we want. Believe anything we trust. Can we vote for the president in the future?

GREEN: Yes, we sure can.

CHRIS: And people can finally trust the government they have chosen. The government will not be corrupt, will never silence us, and we can finally stop fighting anymore, is it?

GREEN: *(Beat)* Yes, just like what you said.

CHRIS: Sounds good. *(She cries)*

GREEN: Mum?

CHRIS: *(Tries to smile)* Sorry, I'm just too scared.

GREEN: *(Beat. Gradually sits up)* You're the bravest heroine I ever knew. There will be more revolutions of your people after you sacrificed. And they finally win, they end the tyranny. The school teaches you, the park has your statue, and we remember. So believe me, you are not sacrificing for nothing.

CHRIS smiles at GREEN.

Blackout.

TWELVE

In a party on the balcony of the mayor's residence, with classical music and chatting voices. LILIAN gets a drink and casually nods to others. DAVE's wife EVE, comes over to her.

EVE: LIL, love, you are here. Why don't you join us?

LILIAN: Nice to see you EVE. You look gorgeous tonight.

EVE: *(Hold LILIAN's hand)* Our time comes around right? It's a girls' day. I've been seeing you on TV all the time. Beautiful and confident; I'm sure you will get the

support of all our female voters.

LILIAN: I'm very honored to hear that.

EVE: I mean really. Times change. Do you know what the media are calling you? The sweet idol of the parliament, like a superstar.

LILIAN: You know what media is, they need an icon, and I'm just lucky.

EVE: I'd like to give you a bit of advice as a senior politician's wife. Those press, the journalists, the paparazzi, they sucked you into the publicity machine and spat you out as their product, in the headlines or magazine cover with the pretty face. Never trust them, they are not your friends. They like you only because you're the best selling product, like I once was.

LILIAN: (*Smiles*) Thank you, EVE. DAVE always taught me, politicians are the products sold to our voters. Our faces, voices, bodies are just images in the marketplace. We are not what we are ourselves, but rather their collective dreams.

(*Naturally lets go of EVE's hand*) So where is him? I haven't talked to him yet.

EVE: I don't know either. (*Drinks up what is left in her glass*) The last time I saw him, he was talking to some interns and they were all laughing. And I wondered what they were saying that could possibly be that funny? (*Beat*) I thought he wanted to get rid of me.

LILIAN: Don't say that.

EVE: Yeah. Saying this kind of thing only makes you more pathetic. (*Beat*) You have two kids, right?

LILIAN: Yeah, I have twins.

EVE: Oh, I always wanted children. Babys are so cute, so comforting. They need you all the time.

LILIAN: And they will grow up, and don't want to be around you anymore. (*Beat*) Not even for Christmas. It makes you doubt yourself. Sometimes it's frustrating.

EVE: Interesting, DAVE and I married when he was an assistant in the diplomatic ministry. *(Beat)* He said he didn't want kids right away, because he wanted to give them the best environment, best education, blah, blah. *(Beat)* And finally I get it. He wanted to have kids in the future, when people can live forever, when there is enough food for everyone around the world, when there are no diseases, no weapons factories, no one bombing anyone else.

DAVE comes with a bottle, he's a little surprised when he sees EVE, but acts normal.

DAVE: Here you are. I was looking for you. *(Kisses EVE, to LILIAN)* There are some donors and diplomats I want to introduce you to. And we need to discuss what you are going to say, mind if I borrow her for a moment?

EVE: They aren't going anywhere, let them wait.

DAVE laughs.

EVE: What's so funny?

DAVE: Nothing. You amaze me, by phrasing such an emergency as though it were your parents coming over for a weekend.

EVE: Well, I didn't invite either of them, did I?

DAVE: Come on, I need a private time with LILIAN/

EVE: As you wish, your grace.

EVE leaves. DAVE pours LILIAN a glass of wine. They drink.

DAVE: What were you talking about?

LILIAN: Nothing, girl's stuff. (*Beat*) She's lonely. Why don't you have any kids?

DAVE: (*Beat*) She's sick. Years ago she had a hysterectomy. It's possible that caused a minor depression, she thinks she's not a woman anymore.

LILIAN: Minor depression?

DAVE: It's like she lost interest in everything, doesn't care, and doesn't even want to be happy anymore.

LILIAN: Everyone wants to be happy.

DAVE: Depressed patients don't. They want to be unhappy to confirm they are depressed. If they were happy, they couldn't be depressed anymore, they have to go out into the world and live, which makes them... depressed.

LILIAN: She's not sick.

DAVE: Isn't she?

LILIAN: She just needs someone's attention.

DAVE: (*Comes near to LILIAN*) Here's a piece of very important news I need you to know. They send a new order.

LILIAN: What is it?

DAVE: The newest directives from the central committee. They need the mayor to take the responsibilities and resign.

LILIAN: What? Why?

DAVE: According to the newest poll, the occupation changed everything. They need to break the deadlock or it might ruin the whole picture. (*Beat*) This is the right move to make him take all the blame, the party is going to disclaim him.

LILIAN : How can they doing this now, the mayor was following their command in the first time, which caused the strike. And now they just want to cut him out?

DAVE: No one care anymore. The situation is bad. They said it might threaten the presidential election next year already. We have no friends left in the party now.

(Beat) He is abandoned.

Beat.

LILIAN: And the concessions we discussed?

DAVE: There will be no more concessions. They are going to call an end to the whole negotiation.

LILIAN: How could I possibly convince them? *(Beat)* The union will be fucking mad at me.

DAVE: The union is out-of-date anyway.

LILIAN: But we have cooperated for decades. *(Beat)* It's bad for locals. People will lose jobs.

DAVE: Yeah, maybe, but there are always new jobs.

Beat.

LILIAN: What will happen if I say no?

DAVE: I don't know. But think it's unrealistic, they could easily stop all the support for your election and replace you with somebody else immediately. *(Beat)* No offence, but you do know you won the primary because of them, right?

LILIAN: *(Beat)* What should I do now? What will you do?

DAVE toast LILIAN with the wine glasses.

DAVE: I told you we are just a commodity, remember? And the worst thing that could happen to us is they treat you like deprecated products. Which makes you realize

how powerless we are. Just like how they treat me once. *(Beat)* If I were you, I would go there and accept all the proposals the party are offering now, and stop answering the calls from the mayor and the union. And I would prepare a new speech putting all the responsibilities back on the mayor, as the decision was proven to be wrong, so I would choose to follow the directions of the central government and stand on the right side. *(Beat)* I know he was good to you. But don't be soft. There's only one will win the election, and you won't need every vote to be that one.

LILLIAN looks at him. DAVE holds her closer.

DAVE: And finally, I would give the man who offered such a wonderful solution to me the best blow job that he ever had in his life as a way of saying thanks.

Beat. LILLIAN kisses DAVE intensely.

Blackout.

THIRTEEN

In a hospital room, GREEN sleeps on the bed, BLUE is with her and has fallen asleep. GREEN wakes up, still dizzy and sleepy, wakes up BLUE.

BLUE: Hey, are you alright?

GREEN: Hey... Wait? Where am I?

BLUE: It's the hospital. *(Touches her face)* Feeling better? You were in a coma.

GREEN: *(Touch her head)* Coma? It's like I slept so long, and had a very bad dream.

But I can't remember...

GREEN moans in pain.

BLUE: Is it painful? The doctor says there are bruises and injuries all over your body, and he found that you... overdosed. Did you remember?

GREEN: *(Beat)* It's all blurry... I remember being dragged into the van, blindfolded. *(Beat, shakes head)* I don't really remember anything.

BLUE: It might be the anesthetic. We don't need to talk about it. I'm glad you are back.

Knocking on the door, MARK comes in.

MARK: Hey, you are awake.

GR-

BLUE goes out. MARK takes a piece of fruit from the basket on the bedside table.

MARK: Want an apple?

GREEN: He didn't tell my mum right?

MARK: No.

GREEN: Good. *(Beat)* She will be furious if she knows I'm here, like this.

MARK: Of course she will worry/

GREEN: No, she won't. She only cares if this will affect her campaign.

MARK: Campaign?

GREEN: Yeah, she might become the next mayor.

MARK: (*Beat*) Wait, councillor LILIAN is your mother?

GREEN: (*Touches her head*) Shit maybe I should keep it secret. You are not her fan are you? Did I ruin your image of her?

MARK: No. It just... (*Beat*) I knew her when I was young. Maybe you won't believe it, but she wasn't at all like what you described.

GREEN: What was she like?

MARK: Um, she was... a girl with great sense of justice, always taking others' problems seriously; very popular, a nice singer, a film buff/

GREEN: Really? Mum doesn't watch movies at all. Are we really talking about the same person?

BLUE comes back.

GREEN: BLUE is just like her, doesn't like movies either. Not even *Batman*. Who doesn't like *Batman*?

BLUE: Those hero movies are stories for kids. The movie companies are selling unrealistic fantasies to people who don't want to think.

GREEN: They are selling dreams.

BLUE: Masked man uses violence to hurt people and call it justice? It's a bad dream for me. (*Beat*) They say you need to rest now, lie down.

GREEN: I don't want to sleep anymore. I want to go.

BLUE: No, you can't.

GREEN tries to find help from MARK.

MARK: He's right. You need more rest.

GREEN: But I'm not sleepy at all. (*Lies down, holds MARK's hand*) Tell me a story to help me sleep then.

MARK: I don't know any.

GREEN: Then, tell me why you were put into prison? You haven't told me the reason yet.

MARK: I don't think it's a good story for sleep.

Beat. GREEN doesn't let go of MARK's hand, and he notices BLUE is looking at him.

MARK: You might never believe it. Almost thirty years ago, me and my girl, we were college students, just like you, we were doing a protest together for freedom of communication. After many conflicts. The government ordered to arrest whoever dared to challenge it, and many our teachers and friends were caught. As a way to fight back. We decide to set a bomb underneath the statue of the president at the memorial square. (*Beat*) We didn't intend to hurt anyone, just desperately wanted to make some changes by destroying the symbol of totalitarianism. Just like breaking down the Berlin Wall, to prove that there is possibility. (*Beat*) But things didn't go as we expected. The bomb exploded and injured a cleaner and her baby daughter. Both of them died. The little girl's head was crushed by the debris from the bomb, and struggled in the hospital for sixteen hours. All the press and media broadcasted images of her dying, and the public started strongly demanding that the murderer must be punished. (*Beat*) So, we decided to let one person to surrender and take the responsibility, claiming it as a personal action.

Pause.

As I said it's not a good story to help you sleep.

GREEN: (*Beat*) Does your fiancée know any of these? She didn't say anything to object? So you were trying to protect her? (*Appreciation*) Aww.

BLUE: Don't go awwing about that. What's to awwing about?

GREEN: It's altruism, it's touching.

BLUE: It was not so for the kids. For me, it sounds they are both irresponsible and selfish people.

GREEN: You're saying that because you do not believe in anyone anymore.

A couple of nurses and doctor come in. They look excited that GREEN is awake. The doctor starts to do some examinations of her, and the Nurse asks BLUE and MARK to leave.

NURSE: Visiting time is up. Please let the patient rest.

*The nurse pushes BLUE and MARK out, and closes the white screen around the bed.
Beat. MARK and BLUE look at each other.*

MARK: At least she looks much better. (*Beat*) It seems she doesn't recall anything, it might not be a bad thing.

Beat.

BLUE: Do you believe in the mental telepathy between twins?

MARK: Probably. You two have that?

BLUE: No. But I know she's always pretending to be overly cheerful when things

were really bad.

MARK: They only give you five more days. What you're going to do?

BLUE: I will find a way. *(Beat)* She said one thing was wrong about me. Just when I thought there would be no one left for me, GREEN came. She's the only one who trusted me, protected me, and helped me to put myself together. Like those heroes, like *Batman*. She did that not because of some accidental blood relationship, but because of something more.

MARK: What?

BLUE: Because she knew I was in need, and she chose to hold my hand tight. *(Beat)* From that moment I swore whenever she needs, no matter how, it's my turn to become her hero. *(Beat)* Does that sound a bit unbelievable from a loser like me?

MARK: No. I don't watch movie a lot, but I know, every hero are always unreliable at the beginning.

BLUE leaves.

Blackout.

FOURTEEN

LILIAN is on another show, set in a kitchen. There's a black cloth covering things on the table.

HOST: Welcome back to tonight's, *Dining with Oscar*, I'm Oscar Lee. And here's my special guest, councillor LILIAN. *(Cheering voices)* It's so nice to have you on our show again, LI.

LILIAN: Hello everyone. It's a great honor to be here.

HOST: First, I want to inform you some great news, LI. Did you follow the latest online vote by *Vogue*? You were chosen as one of the top ten hottest celebrities of the year. Congratulations! (*Cheering voices*) Isn't it great? Such a positive sign for the upcoming election. Want to say something to your voters on the internet?

LILIAN: First of all, I'm so glad about this vote. Thanks to all my supporters, and don't forget to actually vote for me in the next election. I will never let you down.
(*Smiles to the camera*)

HOST: Oh right. That smile can win at least ten thousand more fans. (*Cheering voices*) So now, we have collected many comments and questions from the netizens, would you like to hear them and answer some of their questions?

LILIAN: Ok, bring it on.

HOST: (*Reads the monitor*) Good, here's the first one: 'Her nails make it clear that she never has to do any housework'. Nice observation. And this one says: 'I bet she can't fry an egg without an assistant'. Here's another one, 'She is always bragging about what a great cook she is, but she obviously doesn't even know how to wear an apron'. Wow, that's a little bit harsh. Do you want to answer any of these?

LILIAN: This is a free country. People can say anything they want, especially on the internet. But the fact is, before becoming a politician, I was already a five-star chef.

HOST: Ha-, so confident. Well, LI, there's something we didn't tell you before. We have a surprise mission for you today.

LILIAN: What's that?

HOST: The best way to test the skill of a cook is to see how well she can improvise dishes. So today we are going to test your cooking skills.

HOST removes the cloth. There're lots of cans.

Here're the topics today, we have so many canned food.

LILIAN: Wow, that's a lot of cans.

HOST: It's all very common. Have you made anything with these before?

LILIAN: Of course. Everytime my husband work late, after a long night shift, I'd like to make him something warm. And I will use these. They're the best friends for every housewife.

HOST: (*Applauds*) Guys, here is the perfect wife we all want. Come home to see LILIAN with a warm meal, Jesus. OK, LI, it's time we prove to those netizens that you know how to wear an apron properly. You'll have five minutes to whip up a nice supper. Are you ready? You're five minutes start... now!

LILIAN: That's see what we have here.... Fish, meat balls, corn and tomato soup... Most of these are great ingredients...

LILIAN starts to open cans, but not very skillfully.

HOST: Let the man do the job. (*Opens some cans*)

LILIAN: Thanks, it's tougher than I thought.

HOST: Any ideas?

LILIAN: Hmm... I think I can make a classic fish soup. Using this tomato sauce mackerel with eggs and ginger, it will be lovely.

LILIAN put ingredients into the pot.

LILIAN: With some salt and pepper. Now we wait for couple minutes, the soup will be ready.

HOST: It's quite easy to learn, and it smells really nice.

LILIAN: It's my mum's recipe. She always saying that the right kind of soup can save a person from a miserable day.

HOST: It's a nice saying. (*Receives instruction from the earphone*) So while we are waiting here, would you respond to some questions from our live stream audience?

LILIAN: Of course.

HOST: Here we go. Number one is about the sudden policy changes on the new trade agreement with foreign companies; it seems like you're going to renege on your earlier commitment to the local union. What made you change your mind?

LILIAN: I think that's a misunderstanding. I did not change my mind. The commitment you referred to was made by the former mayor. But since I'm looking for the best opportunities for our city, we have to take into account how the market has been shrinking. We need friends now more than ever. The union has always been my friend, but if I want to be a good mayor I have to consider all the factors from a broad perspective, and take on the responsibility of reform.

HOST: Well, it looks like you have a lot of work ahead. And here's another question, about the student occupation movement. It says the students were setting fires in public, and that your husband ordered the police force to crackdown on the protesting groups. They arrested many students and made everyone so angry. What do you think about this situation, which side are you on?

LILIAN: (*Beat*) As far as I know. The police actions are completely legal. And I believe they tried hard to do everything for public safety. They were afraid that terrorists were behind all of the actions, so the government needed to take necessary measures to prevent escalation. There needs to be a clearer line between social movements and terrorism. We had no intelligence about what was happening inside the protest camp and as a responsible government we never want to be threatened. We have to ask: if we make small concessions, then what next.

HOST: But here someone asks you, as a democratic pioneer, you should easily sympathize with those protestors. Why didn't you come out to show your support for them? Doesn't this violate your beliefs?

LILIAN: Actually, I never stopped appealing for cooperation and negotiation. I can openly reach out here to those young people. I wish to be the bridge between youth and government. *(Beat)* I would like to tell them: I know how angry and helpless you feel now. Because you think you are fighting with an invincible giant, who never listens to you. But also, I want to warn you as a senior fighter. The biggest crisis for the weaker side is to believe that you have the only rightness in fighting against authorities, and believing yourselves to be the only truth.

Beat, she looks at the messages on the live stream.

I notice there're people criticizing me for betraying what I once believed. But I'm not doing that. The fight I fought was for the rule of law, it was for freedom of speech. You will never know what it cost me. But if you only believe in what you believe, and accuse me because I have a different voice, then that makes you no different from the tyranny we fought so hard to defeat. And it's you who are betraying what I believed. *(Beat)* Sorry. But that's enough.

HOST: Excuse me?

LILIAN: The soup. It's enough time for the soup.

Blackout.

FIFTEEN

At the camp of the student movement from scene 9, CHERRY is watching the show on her phone. GREEN comes in wearing hospital pajamas.

CHERRY: GREEN? How can you be here?

GREEN: I sneaked out. And why are you here? Have the police attacked? How is everybody?

CHERRY: *(Beat)* So you didn't know. We retreated; and we are going to end the whole movement tomorrow. I came to pick up some stuff.

GREEN: So they're going to give up the trading deals. It's over.

CHERRY: I guess so. It feels a little bit lonely right? *(Beat)* After this, ANDY says he is going abroad for his PhD, and BILLY might organize a new party with other groups, and start his political career. I might go back to school. What's your plan?

GREEN: I don't know. *(Beat)* Maybe go back to do my online buyer stuff. Or open a youtube channel, I heard that earn a lot. Maybe we can do that together?

CHERRY: That sounds promising.

They laugh.

GREEN: But before that, you might need to introduce me some quick money cases again.

CHERRY: As bikini photographic model? I thought you hated that.

GREEN: Need some money to pay the bills.

CHERRY: *(Look at GREEN, touches her head)* It hurts that bad?

GREEN smiles, CHERRY looks at her phone.

CHERRY: I'll send you the broker's phone. But remember what you told me before.

Don't trade your soul. That's all we got only.

GREEN: Right, but I kinda forget why I need that anymore.

CHERRY: GREEN, one thing I really need to confess to you. I don't want you heard it from anyone else. That ANDY and I, we, we... had something after you left.

(Beat) But it's only sex. It's not something serious. Please don't get mad.

GREEN: *(Beat)* No, it's OK. Actually, it doesn't even make me feel a thing. *(Beat)*

Remember I told you once we broke up, he moved out with the table. That's the only table we had. *(Beat)* Anyway, can I ask you one thing, it has been bothering me for a long time.

CHERRY: Yeah?

GREEN: Once I noticed he was fucking with his eyes closed tightly, like he didn't want to see me when we were fucking. So I asked his reason. And he said he just doesn't want to come too soon. But I find it so... alienating, we girls never done that right? It's like he's not enjoying the sex but using that to run away from something doesn't want to face. *(Beat)* Did you ever notice that?

Noise from outside, ANDY and BILLY come in, they are arguing.

ANDY: ...I said there's no point in sticking around here anymore. It's over.

BILLY: How can this be over? They are going to cancel the whole thing that we were fighting for, for so long!

ANDY: Yeah, but they will drop all the charges against our people. And they promise there will be no any kind of record and subsequent investigation. It's not a bad deal.

You know how the arson case and the gasoline bombs undermined our public support. We should do something before they use it to further provoke the public against us.

BILLY: But we know it wasn't real, they are smearing us. We don't even know who made the bomb.

ANDY: It doesn't matter, don't you see. Most people don't care about what anything really is, they only believe what they want to believe. They just need a blurry impression of who are the good guys and who are the bad guys. And they all want to be on the good side. *(Beat)* It's already done.

BILLY: But we can raise the level, start a hunger strike or something, get ourselves exposure to international attention.

ANDY: If a terrorist starves himself to death or even burns himself in front of the presidential palace would it make you feel sympathetic? No.

BILLY: But we are not terrorist/

ANDY: You still don't get it? When they send the riot quad to the square, the peaceful movement is over. They have everything on their side, money, relationships, media, people-- how can we win?

BILLY: Why do you always want to win, it's not a game. I've been a loser for my whole life, but I'm doing this because it's right, not for some fucking victory.

Beat.

BILLY: So it's true isn't it?

ANDY: What?

BILLY: What did they promise to offer you? *(Pulls ANDY's collar)* Don't lie to me.

CHERRY: Hey, you guys.

ANDY: What's the hell wrong with you.

BILLY: I knew it. I just couldn't believe it until now. You had a deal with them without telling us?

ANDY: You just can't afford to lose, can you? Everything has to go your way. It proves you are a baby. In a political world, it is not so cut and dry, this or that. There is so much in between. If you don't know it, you should fucking get out of this business. Okay?

BILLY: I know it now.

ANDY: So act like it.

BILLY: I will. (*Punches ANDY in the face*) I quit.

CHERRY screams, she goes to ANDY.

BILLY: Nice to see you GREEN.

BILLY leaves.

GREEN: Bye, BILLY. (*To ANDY*) Hey, do you remember that time we broke up, and you take that table we bought, our only table, and I was so pissed/

ANDY: Because its mine, I got it before even met you.

GREEN: Yeah, thanks for that I have to eat off the floor for months.

ANDY: You don't own-

GREEN: That sounds like what dictators do, isn't it?

ANDY: -the story.

GREEN: Rewrite history so they can get their way. Everything becomes subjective, then you can justify it. This time you can keep the table and your story. (*Beat, to*

CHERRY) Bye girl. *(To ANDY)* Open your eyes, asshole.

GREEN leaves.

Blackout.

SIXTEEN

In a spa hotel room, there's a wooden barrel with hot water. TOM sits inside the barrel, enjoying a glass of whiskey. There is sound of someone showering.

TOM: Pretty decent, isn't it? *(Beat)* The spring water can make you forget all your worries, all the bad stuff.

Beat.

TOM: You should join me. The temperature is perfect. *(Beat)* I still can't believe you truly came.

BLUE comes in with a bath towel. TOM looks at him and draws him closer.

BLUE: You must think I'm sick.

TOM: Why you say that?

BLUE: Coming straight to this room.

TOM: I don't think you're sick. I think you need me, like you always do. *(Beat)* Come here. Close your eyes.

TOM rinses BLUE's hair with the bath towel and squeezes out the extra water.

TOM: Come, get in the tub, you look exhausted.

BLUE: (*Do so*) GREEN will be so mad if she knows I came.

TOM: But you still here.

BLUE: Here's the only choice I left. (*Beat*) I want you to make sure they'll stay away from her, forever.

TOM: Just out of curiosity, why didn't call your mother?

BLUE: I had a bad experience of asking help from her. She sent me to a mental hospital at the last time, remember?

TOM: Before we got married, she told me, that you're a sensitive boy who always reminds her about your missing father; you need a father figure to guide, to take care of you and discipline you. She can't do that on her own.

BLUE: And look how good you did to me.

TOM: (*Smiles*) Yeah, I know. You are mad, but not at me. It's always about her, because she chose me instead of you. You think she betrayed you. (*Beat*) That's why you didn't tell her.

BLUE: What? What are you talking about?

TOM: The truth, instead of those stories you made up.

BLUE: I had told her the truth/

TOM: (*Toughly interrupts*) The truth is, at the very minutes when you saw me naked, your dick got so hard. Then when I was washing you, you came in my hand. You were so ashamed and cried like a baby so I comforted you.

BLUE: (*Beat*) You said it's our secret. You said, it will be/

TOM: Much easier. Yes.

BLUE: Then you forced me to suck you.

TOM: And you liked it. Did you mention to your mum how much you enjoyed the sex we had? How many times you came in one night? The sex was so good that you even came to me when your mum is not at home. Don't remember any of that?

BLUE: That's all lies. I never, shouldn't...

TOM: It's OK son, I will help you to recover. *(Beat)* Sometimes, life on this planet is hard, intractable, unreasonable. Even though we work, we struggle. And after a long day we find ourselves sitting alone asking: what is all this for? Is there any meaning in it? I can see this question in your eyes; you ask yourself these questions because you're feeling lost. I can tell you this because I feel the same thing, just like you. So we have to make up stories to help us move on. And that's the truth.

BLUE looks at TOM, who is very close but has not touched him.

TOM: *(Point at the bag puts near the barrel)* Now, be a good boy. Get me that bag over there.

BLUE pulls the bag over.

TOM: Open it.

BLUE does so.

TOM: There's everything you asked me to. Phones, photos, I made sure there wasn't anything she had to worry about.

BLUE: *(Beat)* Thanks.

TOM: Thanks who? Call me the name I taught you.

BLUE: (*Beat*) Thank you papa.

TOM takes a smaller pack from the bag, take some pills in his hand.

TOM: And here is their compensation. We call this ‘sugar’. (*To BLUE*) Take one.

Beat. BLUE takes one, and another one. TOM amused, gives him whiskey to wash down the pills.

TOM: You know at even on the worst battlefield, when people are going to starve to death, some of them will still spend their last penny on sugar rather than food. It’s not irrational, because they are in a hell-like world. People need something to help them remember that something good might still happen. (*Takes a pill*) You’ll feel that quickly.

BLUE: It’s... dizzy. The whole room is spinning.

TOM: Hold on to me then. Hold on to papa, and never let go.

TOM kisses BLUE and touches him in the tub. BLUE hesitates and kisses him back.

Blackout.

SEVENTEEN

At the same building as in scene 1, in darkness, Green wears hospital pajamas carries a bag and stands there looking at the place she drew CHRIS's picture, but now it is gone. MARK comes in with a flashlight.

MARK: Fuck, not you again.

GREEN: You mopped it up.

MARK: That's what they pay me for.

GREEN: I want to apologize to her.

MARK: To whom? Lady CHRIS? What you apologize for?

GREEN: I've kind of lied to her. *(Beat)* I told her things are getting better now, but things are not.

MARK: But have you tried to make things better?

GREEN: I think I did. I tried so hard.

MARK: Then she will understand.

GREEN: You really think so?

MARK: Sure. *(Beat)* Things are getting back on track, the government has stepped back and the student group also stepped back, the mayor's gone. Things have been solved peacefully. Everything will gradually change back to what it was.

GREEN: That's not better. *(Beat)* The new government, they will sign the trading deal anyway in the future. We didn't stop it, actually, we failed.

MARK: And why can't you fail

GREEN: *(Beat)* I don't know.

Beat.

MARK: So you'll keep protesting?

GREEN: No, I quit.

MARK: Nice, we didn't want to disturb you, to tell you the crowd is all dissolved.

(Looks aground) They actually made it quite clean.

GREEN: That's why I think someone should still come, to leave something, as a goodbye.

Beat.

MARK: OK.

GREEN: OK?

MARK: Yeah, why not? Like you said, it's your right to write.

GREEN: And you will come back tomorrow morning to clean them all up?

MARK: Sure I will.

GREEN: I will make it hard this time.

MARK: Bring it on. *(Beat)* What are you plan for this time? Make a sculpture?

GREEN sneezes, MARK takes off his coat and put it on her.

MARK: You should wear more, you might catch a cold.

GREEN: Thanks.

MARK: *(Beat)* I'm thinking, maybe we can have a drink sometime, you, me, and your brother, hang out for a bit. I heard there's a nice bar around...

GREEN: You are asking me out?

MARK: No, no, no, just thought we clicked. We have, we have clicked, haven't we?

In a way? In a... In a weird way that friends ... friends usually click? (*Beat*) You don't want to?

GREEN: I'll love that.

MARK: OK, cool/

MARK's radio rings.

MARK: (*Answer the radio*) Yeah, yeah, it's alright here. But we really need to change the locks on the windows. (*To GREEN*) I need to go now. I will lock the door and let you finish what you want to do here.

MARK leaves.

GREEN: MARK! (*He stops*) What if I tell you, (*Points at her bag*) There is a can of gasoline in this bag and I'm going to burn this building down. Will you call the cops to arrest me?

Beat.

MARK: No, I don't think so. Although I don't know how to persuade you to stop that. (*Beat*) Tell you a secret. After I was released from prison, I always felt that I might have to go back. It like I'm not used to this free world it likes now, and seems to be more comfortable with life inside. Is it ironic? (*Smiles*) Still, I hope that you don't have any gasoline, because then maybe we can still have a drink someday.

MARK leaves.

GREEN stands there, looking at the empty place where she drew CHRIS's picture, she starts humming the Song of the Covered Wagon.

GREEN takes a bottle of gasoline out and pours gasoline on the floor. She flips on a lighter but then hesitates.

BLUE comes in with a flashlight, he raises the flashlight to look at her.

BLUE: Got you.

GREEN: Why the hell are you here?

BLUE: Must be the mental telepathy. *(Beat)* Just saw you talking to MARK, everything alright?

GREEN: I'm going to ask you, hours ago, I got an anonymous call telling me that every misunderstanding between us has been resolved, and they will compensate for my loss. Is that by any chance related to you?

BLUE: No clue.

GREEN: What did you do? *(Beat)* No, you don't. I can't believe this.

Pause.

GREEN: I don't know what to say.

BLUE: How about: Thank you, and you're a wonderful brother.

GREEN: We cut off all contact with them, because we both want to live independently and with dignity. We don't want to owe them anything, anymore. They don't deserve us. *(Beat)* And now you are saying we are going to give all that up? Just forgive everything?

BLUE: I'm not saying about forgive. *(Beat)* I just, I remembered in the old days, when mom has left us for so long and when I got insomnia at night. He would run

to my bed and hug me; tell me his story, about how his father abused him, which makes him hate himself. He never understood why his daddy done those shit-things to him, and I think he might not know why he's doing those things to me either.

Yesterday, when we were together, I found him so old and so impotent, he doesn't know what to do to with the unhappiness deep inside, so he needs pills to help him to... get there, you know. It makes me sad. *(Beat)* It's like a loop, and I'm so sick of it. Because it reminds me that maybe we are not actually so different.

GREEN: *(Beat)* So we just put down everything?

BLUE sits beside GREEN.

BLUE: No. I just want to start all over now. It's like I spent too much time making up for my fuck-up childhood already.

GREEN: So what are you going to do?

BLUE: Maybe start a small business. A food stall or something?

GREEN: You can't cook.

BLUE: I'm sure it's not so hard to learn.

Beat.

GREEN: So that's what you're coming to tell me, you want to join the cooking industry?

BLUE doesn't answer, only looks at her, and throws the flashlight away in frustration, GREEN looks at it.

GREEN: Remember we use to make wishes on shooting stars?

BLUE: Yeah.

GREEN: How sad is that.

BLUE: Why?

GREEN: Image spending your whole life alone, hurling through space, hoping to make an impact somewhere. And when you finally get close to doing something big, something meaningful. You just burn out in the atmosphere. So I always wish maybe this time fate will be different.

BLUE: Like it will crash the sun and destroyed the civilization?

GREEN: Maybe.

Beat.

BLUE: So, that's what you're going to do now?

GREEN: I only want to stop things from getting worse. If I go now, we will soon be forgotten. Sooner or later things will be repeated over and over again. Will not end. *(Takes out the lighter)* I hope that what we do can be remembered, so even if we lose today, but as long as others don't give up, maybe one day, with a little bit of luck, the world can get better. Even if only a little bit.

Beat.

BLUE: OK.

GREEN: What does that mean?

BLUE: What does it sound like? I'm not going to stop you. I come here *for* you.

(Stands up) So, let's blow up this building.

Beat. GREEN stands by BLUE. BLUE finds that her hand which is holding the lighter is shaking.

BLUE: You're nervous?

GREEN: I'm scared.

BLUE: Come, hold my hand.

BLUE reaches out a hand and GREEN holds it.

GREEN: Heh, surprisingly nice.

BLUE: Surprisingly?

They smile.

BLUE: You're OK?

GREEN: Yeah.

BLUE: I am OK too.

GREEN: I know.

BLUE: How?

GREEN: Cause I'm OK too.

Blackout.

Alarm ringing.

EIGHTEEN

In the dark, a TV screen shows the image of a burning building.

REPORTER: Breaking news. Just about two hours after an explosion at the parliament building the suspect has surrendered himself at the police station. The police believe that he is the same person involved in recent arson attacks. But during an interrogation by the chief of National security agency, TOM WEINSTEIN, the suspect detonated a bomb that was hidden somewhere on his person. Both were seriously injured, and the chief died before arriving to the hospital. The murderer is unconscious, and the local police haven't determined his identity yet. There is high suspicion that this is a revenge attack for the dissolved protest movement. *(Beat)* The widow, who is also a candidate for mayor. LILIAN LI, has just announced a press conference. We will take you there now.

LILIAN is on the screen, continually wiping her tears. She holds TOM's cap.

LILIAN: ...We met in the liberation movement. And we loved talking about politics, and what might be an ideal government. Some people believe these are holy things which need to be protected. Some would rather let it all burn. They were ready to blow up the whole city because it doesn't belong to them. *(Beat)* But this was not TOM, he taught me that destruction is no protection. The city is not a political symbol, but our home. *(Beat)* Once he came home after a night shift, his head was bleeding and there were bruises everywhere. I was angry, because I think no one has the right to attack police officers in this country. He said ninety-nine percent of front-line policemen have been victims of abuse at the hands of dissatisfied

protesters. I don't get it, how hitting an officer can give any satisfaction to these people. But he says he can understand. It's like when you stare at ugly things for too long, you become ugly inside yourself. The violence might be the only remaining method for some people, they think it is better than just sitting around and waiting for nothing. They think maybe, if they use violence, something will change. *(Beat)* But isn't it the worst thing to use violence to force others to change? That's why I believe in VOTING, in DEMOCRACY, we need to stand up, and show people how beautiful things could be, like my Thomas.

LILIAN *choked, can't talk anymore* journalists rush to take pictures and ask questions.

Light changes.

GREEN *is sitting at a dining table, watching TV.* BLUE *brings dishes to the table.*

GREEN: She's going to win right?

BLUE: You hope she loses?

GREEN: I don't know the difference. *(Beat)* How was your interview?

BLUE: It was a disaster. *(Beat)* I would be a shitty cook anyway.

GREEN: I like your cooking. What're we going to have?

BLUE: Fish soup. Learned it from the *Dining with Oscar* show. *(Beat)* What?

GREEN: There's only one thing. I don't like fish.

BLUE: You don't? Why?

GREEN: Don't like its taste, you know they pee in the water they swim in.

BLUE: Just like kids.

GREEN: I don't eat kids either.

BLUE: Wash hands before you eat. And you shouldn't watch TV during the meal, bad

for your health.

GREEN: OK, mum.

BLUE leaves, GREEN wants to turn off the TV, but it shows breaking news with a picture of MARK. She stops.

GREEN: Hey.

BLUE: What?

GREEN: MARK is here.

REPORTER: ...The suspect of the arson attacks has woken up. He confessed to all of his crimes and the local police found a twenty-year-old criminal record, he has a long history of radical political dissent using bomb attacks to fight for personal freedom from the government. After injured innocent bystanders he spent nine years in prison. So why did he do it again? An expert in criminal psychology analysis has suggested that the suspect might be traumatized by his prison experience, which is a common syndrome. Ironically, it means that though he is free; he still cannot live normally: this causes them to repeat the original crime. This time, the suspect might face the charge of life imprisonment. Stay tuned, we will have a detailed report in the next news on the hour.

BLUE brings the soup back in.

TV shows an image of MARK bandaged and lying in a hospital bed.

GREEN: See, that's him. He looks ...

BLUE: Alive.

GREEN: Yeah. I don't know why he is doing this, surrendering before us. *(Takes out*

the picture of MARK and his parents) I want to say thanks to him in person.

BLUE: *(Takes it over)* Where did you get this?

GREEN: I found it in the pocket of his coat.

BLUE: They look very happy. Taking good care for him before we return it back.

(Beat) And now, let's have dinner.

GREEN finds a photo frame and she puts the photo on the table. The TV shows the juxtaposition of images of MARK, TOM and LILIAN.

BLUE joins the table.

BLUE: It's like a family reunion. It's been so long.

GREEN: *(Smells)* Mmm, better than I thought.

BLUE: Try some of this. *(Feeds GREEN with a fork, she enjoys it)* Want a bit more?

GREEN: Mmmm, of course. And this is for you. *(Feeds BLUE)*

BLUE: I can help myself, OK... *(Bites)* It's quite nice, right? My turn.

BLUE and GREEN feed each other in turn, as the lights fade to black.

Blackout.

End

Chapter 4: Analysis of *Voting and Fucking*: Applying Ravenhill's aesthetic to Taiwanese theatre

4-1 The creative background of *Voting and Fucking*

As mentioned in Chapter One, the hostile relationship between Taiwan and PR China made many Taiwanese concerned about China's growing influence over Taiwan, and how Taiwan's economic market was to be ultimately controlled by Beijing. The obvious disparity of strength only intensified the need for the Taiwanese people to respond with either aggression or apolitical indifference (Chen, 2001: 600). In this context, the Sunflower Movement rose up against the KMT president Ying-Jiu Ma, for signing the Cross-Strait Agreement on Trade in Services with China, in the absence of sufficient congressional supervision. Over four hundred people who opposed the Agreement occupied the Parliament building overnight and on the second day, decided to escalate the protest, intending to occupy the Cabinet building. By this time, the Premier Yi-Hua Jiang had ordered the police to use force to drive away the crowds. This led to a serious conflict between police and civilians and more than 150 people were injured, making this the most serious incident since 1996. The police attacked unarmed students and sprayed them with water cannons. These images were widely and repeatedly broadcast through all kinds of media, which became propaganda that led more and more people to sympathize with the Sunflower Movement. The Taiwanese began to evaluate this action from the perspective of watching a heroic movement: large amounts of food, water and medicines were sent to the scene to support the occupying protesters. Because a flower shop owner sent a few bunches of sunflowers, the media named this movement the 'Sunflower Movement'.

On 30th March, the total number of people gathered around the Parliament building for either a sit-in protest or demonstration on Ketagalan Avenue to support

the occupation was over 500,000. This huge number forced the government to finally compromise and the president of the Parliament Jin-Ping Wang committed to legislating the supervision bills before the completion of the Cross-Strait Agreement. The protesters finally retreated from the building peacefully on 10th April.



▲ The night outside the Cabinet building, taken from *Sunflower Movement*
Photography – Day light.

Before this period, I wasn't enthusiastic about politics or economics and unable to judge whether signing such an agreement was good or bad for Taiwan. However, many of my friends who joined this protest told me confidently about how they are going to stop this deal because it was 'selling' Taiwan. However, I was still unsure, as (just like me) they didn't have any professional knowledge or expertise on the relevant issues. This made me worry about these protests as undermining our democratic and constitutional system, because it deconstructed or even bypassed procedural justice, arousing a high-risk populist emotion against the legitimacy of the rule of law. When the protesters painted 'When dictatorship is a reality, the revolution

will be our responsibility' on the wall of the Parliament building, they had already decided that the government was a rotten dictatorship, in league with autocratic China. Therefore, this movement justified all their actions as civil disobedience, even when they acted against the law and left no alternative for the government but to retreat. The criticism of this populist atmosphere was captured by political theorist Ernesto Laclau, who emphasized the indiscernibility of the masses, their blind susceptibility to incitement and the possibility of harm to the important principles of democracy, which allows people to negotiate with others who have different opinions. Objectively, Laclau suggests that all political movements are kinds of populist movements, based on specific logic of articulation. Therefore, the real question here is not whether a movement has a populist tendency but to what extent is a movement populist (Laclau, 2005: 9).

Throughout the whole process, few convincing reasons, debates, facts or figures are given about the true value or disadvantage of this trade deal. Rather, the focus was on the ideology: anti-China, anti-unification. This reminds me of the Tian-an men Square Protests (also called the 4th June Accident), a political protest against Communist China, which happened in 1989. Since the 1950s, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have formed a binary opposition of 'Anti-Communist' and 'Anti-Right wing' due to the Cold War structure. Each adopted a governance model for the establishment of a new society after the separation. This also demonstrates the internalization of boundaries and the division of 'enemies' between the two groups of people. Therefore, Taiwanese were told by the 'Democratic' ROC government that the Chinese government was using military force against innocent students and civilians; and again, this was the best propaganda for the ROC's democracy and legitimacy. Taiwan hosted many escaped Chinese students persecuted at the time, such as Dan Wang and Wu Er-Kai-Xi, and because of the interception of cross-strait information,

most Taiwanese like me can only see or hear these allegations against the totalitarian government and feel angry at this regime that used military methods against its people. I had never doubted this matter until the two sides began to gradually open up and we became able to access more information from China. I was surprised to find that in many of China's records, this whole incident has a narrative and description that is completely different from ours. Such differences were automatically interpreted by Taiwanese as a product of an authoritarian government controlling information and speech.

For example, a photo once widely publicized in Taiwan shows a man named Wei-Lin Wang standing in front of tanks and blocking them alone. I was taught in Taiwan when I was young that the tank later crushed him. However, when I saw the video materials from China, I realized that what I knew is wrong: this person was pulled away and removed. No-one knows what happened to him later, and his name is not Wei-Lin Wang. Taiwanese seem to have been in a state of ‘memory farming’, indulging in the subjective state of grouping together against imaginary enemies. The participants are not ignorant or brainwashed, but have been nurtured by their patriotic state to embrace a collective hive-mentality that persists in fear of Communists, China and foreigners. This is similar to what Giorgio Agamben discussed in *State of Exception* (2005), in which he analyzed the United States launching the war against terrorism and expanded its military force to Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf. The Bush regime initiated the USA Patriotic Act after 9/11 and expanded administrative discretion on the surveillance, inspection, and detention of citizens and non-citizens. Agamben uses this as an example of regimes, including democratic countries, that have become models of the ruling power, using the ‘state of exception’ to stimulate national patriotism and external fear, eventually subverting democratic checks and balances (such as the parliament) and turning into a totalitarian state. This discovery

made me very alert every time I saw a reinterpretation of the 28th February or the *White Terror* in Taiwan. Is the purpose the pursuit of truth, or political interests?



▲ On 5th June, 1989, ‘Wang, Wei-Lin’ blocked a tank from moving. This is generally considered to be a landmark photo of the Tian-an men Square Protests. This photo was taken by Associated Press photographer Jeff Wyden.

When I created *Voting and Fucking*, I wanted to convey this suspicion of the facts/histories we think we know. I referred to Ravenhill’s tactics of depicting multiple intertwining storylines of different generations to expose conflicting ideologies (De Buck, 2009: 63). This juxtaposes political opponents spanning three different generations: CHRIS from the ’50-’70s; LILIAN and MARK from ’80-’90s; and GREEN’s people after 2000s. I use the Japanese song *Song of the Covered Wagon* to link this to the memory of Taiwanese political confrontation. The song is based on the story of Hao-Dong Zhong (1915-1950), who was sacrificed during the *White Terror*. It represents the experience of many high-ranking intellectuals who lived under Japanese rule, but could not find a sense of identity and sought to be reunited with China. In the KMT era, Zhong was arrested and tortured. He sang this song when he finally stepped onto the execution ground and the song became a tacit

understanding between Taiwanese political prisoners: that is, when someone was to be executed that night, the other prisoners would sing this song in their cells to see him off. This song is first sung in scene 8, as LILIAN says: 'It's a song the old revolutionaries used to sing before receiving the death penalty [...] It's like a spiritual symbol we inherited.' (201) It is also sung at the beginning and end of scene 11: CHRIS uses it as a means of comfort. Finally, the song appears in scene 17, before GREEN ignites the gasoline in the government building; she sings it as an encouragement. Repeatedly singing the same song also implies that the same mistakes have occurred again and again.

CHRIS's generation is based on the periods from the *White Terror* to the *Formosa Incident* (1979), adapted from iconic figures such as Ming-De Shih, Yu-Xiong Lin and Xiu-Lian Lu, who were persecuted by the autarchic government and suffered life imprisonment or torture for advocating liberty, equality and other civil rights. They represented the darkest part of the history of Taiwanese Democratization between the liberal fighters and national machines. For example, Ming-De Shih was sent to prison for 25 years, and went on a hunger strike. In order to prevent his death, the government force-fed him, which cost him all his teeth; his brother Ming-Zheng Shih accompanied him on the hunger-strike outside of prison and died of malnutrition. While Yu-Xiong Lin was in prison, his mother and twin daughters were ruthlessly killed in his home. The murderer was never found, but the majority of media suspected this atrocity might be orchestrated by the government as a warning (Kang, 2013: 281-287). Xiu-Lian Lu later became Taiwan's first female vice president, but during her time in jail, communication with the outside world was blocked, so she received the news of her mother's death five days after her mother passed away. This experience was also borrowed and used with the character MARK, which I will discuss later.

The generation of LILIAN is a response to the Wild Lily student movement (1990), because the movement finally succeeded in starting the democratization of this country. Therefore, many leaders and participants entered the government or were elected as politicians later, which is known in Taiwan as the ‘student movement generation.’ LILIAN and DAVE have each participated in a successful liberation movement. They became the new generation of political elites and obtained positions in government agencies. However, as social development researcher Xin-Xing Chen describes when discussing the features of politicians from the student movement generation, their election campaigns often struggle to come up with competitive policies, opinions and visions of what the new era needs and instead use vague slogans such as ‘Human rights’ or ‘Democracy’, which have been deprived of the vitality of the Wild Lily and seem flat and obsolete (Chen, 2004). Furthermore, there is a paradox revealed by the historical process: people once strove for equal rights, but they often then become the oppressive power-holders in the next historical period, as political revolution demands people form an exclusive and operational group when consolidating consensus or establishing a common foundation. Even if a democratic government was eventually created, this can still be manipulated (Rancière, 2007; 1999: 135-144). Therefore, some of this generation, like MARK, feel disappointed when the Wild Lily participants celebrate their victory, because for them the Wild Lily compromised with the government and in some senses ‘sold out’ the ideal they originally wanted to achieve. It’s similar to Ravenhill uses Nick in *Some Explicit Polaroids*, he hardly recognises Helen, who was once a militant activist, but now bought a council flat and works in local government. The entire process of participating in the protest turned into an excuse for seeking power and re-election. This conflict is played out in scene 5 between LILIAN and MARK, which I will also analyze later.

Thus, the generation corresponds to the Sunflower Movement, represented by the twins BLUE and GREEN. These are also the colours of the two major political parties in Taiwan. I am not trying to make them represent the ideology of either party: on the contrary, I want to emphasize that these two different colours still belong to the same family. BLUE represents a kind of youth who doesn't care about politics, indifferent when it comes to voting, in a referendum or on any public issues. As the representative of individualism, he only cares about what happens around him or will affect him directly. On the other hand, GREEN is enthusiastic about politics, maybe naively due to lack of experience. She worships the radical behaviour of those early pioneers and has idealized the notion of reforming society, even by violent means. This is what leads her and her partners to carry out the accidental occupation in scene 3. However, in this play, I deliberately did not specify what they are protesting against, only using an unspecified international trading deal as the background. This is because I want to broaden this issue beyond the limited power struggle between the Taiwanese people and our government. Under the influence of globalization, the whole world is facing a conflict between locals and outsiders. On New Year's Eve in 2015-2016, large-scale sexual assault and harassment occurred in Cologne Square, Germany. The offenders were mostly immigrants or refugees, presumably acting out of accumulated resentment and a sense of 'otherness'. As Žižek describes, this is not a political action, but an incompetent 'passage to the act' (Žižek: 2016; 2008b: 76). This global conflict between the insider and the other occurred a few years earlier in Taiwan, because of the relationship with China.

The democratic system has, to a certain extent, proved that it cannot solve such crises well. For example, President Donald Trump openly blames economic problems on immigrants, refugees, Muslims, Mexicans, and China; the United Kingdom also targets issues relating to immigrants, immigrant workers and refugees that may enter

Britain via the European Union, as shown in the EU referendum. It seems that both of these countries want to avoid the infringement or loss of domestic interests, removing themselves from the responsibility of globalization or European integration.

Surprisingly, the global mainstream public opinion has almost never endorsed Trump's ideas or Brexit. Even mainstream British public opinion ridicules Trump, and mainstream American public opinion is that Britain leaving the EU is unwise.

However, under the democratic system of the two countries, Trump is in full swing and the British Brexit will shortly become a reality. Taiwan is actually in a similar position. The populist Sunflower Movement vigorously preached that, as John Locke argues in *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), individuals maintain independence in the community and the country and that the indispensable freedom of an individual should not be violated by the government. They strongly advocated the claims of civil disobedience made by David Thoreau, and in Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762), to justify the protest (Gang, 2015: 128, 136). However, there is not enough debate as to how we should deal global problems (such as China's rise, which is not just a problem for Taiwan) in this struggle; also they ignore the rule of law, which removes the accountability and/or criticism of policy-makers or representatives of the democratically elected Legislative Yuan. They could not even explain why, if the Legislative Yuan cannot be trusted, the protesters' proposal of a 'cross-strait agreement monitoring mechanism' is any better (Lu, 2014: 4-5).

The Sunflower Movement used the economic recession to transform the collective uneasiness of the young generation into a crisis of sovereignty and a call for Taiwanese independence. Using conspiracy theories based on fear of the surrounding environment, the movement has mobilized public dissatisfaction to create a 'radical chic' of political participation (Taggart, 2005: 127, 142; Miessen, 2010: 35). Spread on the internet, such emotions were broadly labeled as 'patriotic'; similar logic is

displayed on other political issues, such as supporting the death penalty, which is seen as savage and backward; supporting nuclear power is anti-human and so on (Lu, 2014: 45).

4-2 Analysis of the methodology: applying Ravenhill's *Queer's Journey*

Here I want to briefly explain how and why my play applied Ravenhill's dramaturgy to help in understanding the play. Firstly, I would like to explain what I do here is not a direct adaptation of Ravenhill's work; the focus of this application is not merely the imitation of plots, content or storyline, but the inspiration by Ravenhill's aesthetic strategies and socio-political concerns. As with the '*Queer's Journey*' discussed in Chapter Two, I have been indigenized the method to respond to current political issues in Taiwan.

As Walter Benjamin discussed in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility' (1935), there had been a loss of 'aura' in original works of art in the modern age of reproduction and cloning. However, Benjamin is not arguing that 'originality' has lost its importance, but rather than there are more possibilities and deeper credibility that the attendant deconstruction could make from freeing the interpretation of the original objects (Benjamin, 2008: 22-23; Sanders, 2006: 192). By 1999, the in-yer-face theatre had become a new orthodoxy. Audiences were not easily shocked or upset by offensive language, sexual or drug-related content. The audience's aesthetics changed with the times, as well as growing weary and desensitized by repetition. The part of Ravenhill's writing that attracted me is based on the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Cold War, which translated into unprecedented theatrical freedom and a new sense of possibility. The intersection of commerce and sex had become a daily experience, shaping a specifically current British culture: as Sierz describes, 'it could express outrage without being politically correct' (Sierz, 2001: 36, 245; Svich, 2003: 81).

Therefore, the process for this inspiration is not plagiarism or copying, as I do not intend to make a straightforward reproduction of any original Mark Ravenhill play. As I illustrated before, as Bond influenced Ravenhill through the theatrical

‘aggro-effect’, what I hope to build is the result of mutual influence between theatres across cultures and generations. By using the ‘issues of gender/queerness’ as a means of inserting my own political argument about Taiwanese marginalized identity, this dramaturgy of ‘Queer’ should not merely belong exclusively to Ravenhill. As I introduced in Chapter One, it is no longer enough to use Wei-Ran Chi-style jokes and satire in contemporary Taiwan to face the political issues I want to confront. I want to create the possibility of writing new texts or new political dramas to respond to questions between different ideologies, and provide contemporary Taiwanese theatre with an alternative direction. Just as Taiwanese theatre had a tradition of absorbing Western avant-garde thought and aesthetics since the 1970s, introducing new ideas might also be a good way of approaching the question of globalization versus localization in the current era. Certain cultural transfers preserve the source culture, and more importantly, the point of view of the ‘other’ can be absorbed by the receiving culture, which is a crucial question for Taiwanese theatres and audiences to consider (Pavis, 1996: 13).

Here, the title *Voting and Fucking* is a tribute to *Shopping and Fucking*, to acknowledge the intertextuality and allusiveness. As in *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Linda Hutcheon argues that adaptation is a process of re-interpretation and re-creation, and also a form of ‘intertextuality’ which is a repetition of the ‘variation’ in other works formed by our memories (Hutcheon, 2006: 6-9; 170). However, although a few scenes and structures of the story are adapted from multiple plays by Ravenhill, while the main plot and story are based on the actual political movement taking place in Taiwan. Ravenhill’s influence is thus more of a narrative strategy and atmosphere. Hutcheon has proposed the term ‘indigenization’ to capture how meaning and impact shift radically in transcultural adaptation processes and to register the dialogue that takes place between societies as a result; Julie Sanders in *Adaptation and*

Appropriation (2006) further explains that ‘appropriation’ frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source, into a wholly new cultural product and domain (Sanders, 2006: 30). In my work, the act of appropriation involves ‘Taiwanizing’ of the themes and approach in quite self-conscious ways to explore the topic of national identity and political inheritance. In ‘appropriation’, the intertextual relationship may be less explicit, but a political or ethical commitment shapes a writer's, director's or performer's decision to reinterpret a source text (Sanders, 2006: 3-5). This also explains why *Voting and Fucking* does not seem to have obvious similarities to Ravenhill's works even though it is based on Ravenhill's dramaturgy (Hutcheon, 2006: 174; Sanders, 2006: 6).

As in the early versions of this practice, *Voting and Fucking* has made use of certain plot points, lines and symbols from Ravenhill's works. For example, the reunion of MARK and LILIAN in scene 5 is similar to that between Nick and Helen in *Some Explicit Polaroids*. BLUE confesses his experience of being sexually assaulted by his stepfather in scene 9, as seen in *Shopping and Fucking*; the time-travel after GREEN took drugs in scene 10 was inspired by Phil injecting heroin in *Handbag* and time-traveling to the Victorian era; and the JAILOR in scene 11 is an imitation of Paul in *The Cut*. However, I undertook a major revision, in which I weakened the original use of violence based on the commercialization of sex. The reason behind this change is regarding to the current theatrical culture in Taiwan, nudity, sexual abuse or even intimate sexual scenes are not uncommon anymore; and same-sex sexual scenes are easily confused with particular issues as to fight for gender or marriage equality (See Qiu, 2014). Therefore, in *Voting and Fucking*, I reduced the importance of sex, instead of utilizing the problem of drug trafficking in Taiwan to extend the discussion of whether young people can make sounds judgments in a society where individual liberalism is prevalent. I wanted to ask those who pursue

the value of freedom whether they have in fact fallen into an unfree state, using drugs to escape reality and responsibility. These amendments reduced unnecessary conflicts of different cultural backgrounds, aiding the communion within Taiwanese audiences and showing the 'Queer's Journey' to be embedded more clearly in my play, attending to voices that are not usually heard.

When I was creating my characters, I chose Mark's name from *Shopping and Fucking* as the name of my core role. In this play, MARK is a compromised middle-aged man who has lost his enthusiasm. To some extent, he represents Taiwan's moderate politicians such as President Ying-Jeou Ma (their first names are also similar). Although other characters are partially based on real people, such as the leader of the Sunflower Movement, after much consideration, I chose names that obscure the referential nature of these roles as I do not want people to make unnecessary associations. The young twins' names refer to the representative colours of Taiwan's two parties, BLUE and GREEN; however, their political beliefs and personalities are not necessarily related to these parties. Rather, the identity of the twins was borrowed from Ravenhill, as the two different individuals are each an indispensable part of completing the whole family/society/nation puzzle.

Just as characters in Ravenhill's works are trying to make sense of the world without religion or ideology to guide them, and just as ideal patriarchal rule has never appeared in Taiwan's history, my characters are also without parental guidance. They need to discover their own way to live as they go. After accumulating experience, the previous generation of protesters (such as LILIAN and DAVE) demand sympathy votes in the election as the victim's comrades. However, they were really pursuing their own interests, just like the totalitarians they once fought against. The younger characters find themselves in the dilemma of whether to compromise (as LILIAN did) or simply destroy everything, including themselves (as CHRIS did). My aim is to

keep the audience off-balance with conflicting feelings of empathy and criticism, to consider further how we should face the collision of opinions between a government and its people, and how can we avoid repeated unnecessary violence or sacrifice.

There will always be moments of conflict between government and people:

democracy is a mechanism designed to alleviate such friction. Therefore, I hope this play can be discussed under the logic of universality, as the theme of *Ravenhill* is the gaze of different ideological identities. I aim to confront the painful and chaotic new order to reflect on the external environment, rather than make connections with a specific political event. The audience does not need to know anything about the political background of Taiwan or the Sunflower Movement.

4-2-1 The 'Queer' identity in *Voting and Fucking*

Richard Bryan (2006) argues that, in modern society, people try to separate themselves from others. The desire to be an individual often forces one to select and articulate one's identity from a range of pre-existing options. In other words, some individuality is prescribed, such as Ravenhill depicts when people identify themselves and others using the objects and commodities that they purchase and collect. They may not notice they are unable to express any part of their existence without recourse to the language of capitalism, because the predominant ideology has become invisible to them (Bryan, 2006: 145-6). Ravenhill asserts that none of his main characters in *Shopping and Fucking* are fully adult: he calls them adult children. They are all needy, greedy, wounded, and only fleetingly able to connect with the world around them. Consumerism or late capitalism has created an environment of the infant 'me,' where it is difficult to grow into the adult 'us' (Shaw, 2008: 62). Similarly, all the characters in *Voting and Fucking* are giant infants created by the dominant populist democratic system, which forces them to play the populist game via the political party or candidate they vote for. This means they are similar to the 'flaneur' in Benjamin's description, i.e. wandering the streets in order to experience a city. They play insignificant roles, having an engaged but also alienated relationship with the city; they can't live without cities because they are obsessed with the city scenery, but they are also marginalized by the city (Benjamin, 1983: 170). This identity is like Rancière's 'part of no part', or Ravenhill's queer characters. It is also the mentality of most young voters in Taiwan, who are usually dissatisfied with and disengaged from political affairs, but cannot exert any actual influence without becoming more engaged. They see themselves as 'the people' i.e. the master of democratic system, but in the reality far greater influence is exerted by political parties and the media. These individuals often find that their opinion (or single vote) is meaningless. Therefore,

these frustrated people can only express their disappointment and anger through the internet, condensing into a collective identity (known as ‘villages’ in Taiwan’s online community): political marginalists created by contemporary Taiwanese democracy. The characteristics of this kind of identity are shown in the two protagonists, GREEN and BLUE, as representatives of two opposite types: one extremely passionate about politics, one totally indifferent. GREEN inherits their parents’ enthusiasm for politics and wants to uphold radical ideals. BLUE is just the opposite because of his unpleasant experiences: he refuses to connect with others and indirectly this causes him to lose his subjectivity. Because there are many differences, in the following I will introduce the queer qualities represented by these two separately; however, the common reason for their occurrence is caused by a sense of powerlessness in Taiwan’s democratic politics.

According to queer theory expert Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s definition, the term ‘queer’ originated from German ‘quer’ which means ‘across’; that can be seen as a blurring of the boundary between normal and abnormal. Therefore, queerness represents transitive and multiple objects, not only resisting separatism but also assimilation. In short, the queer trait always works in a relative relationship; it is always unusual, and deliberately remains oblique, continually mutating and rejecting assimilation with the mainstream (Sedgwick, 1993: 5-9). Therefore, the queerness identity is as a position on the edge of normality; queers are outsiders, representing the minorities that always exist in society. This research tries to explore how to find consensus and take better care of a democratic society with diverse minorities. At the beginning of *Voting and Fucking*, GREEN breaks into the government building via a broken window and uses chalks to write and draw the accusations she wants to make. However, when MARK asks her why she didn’t use something that would be harder to remove, she answers ‘I don’t really want to piss your boss. I stop my job already,

can't afford to pay if they fine me.' (166) It can be seen here that she is only a weak and powerless rebel in society. Her queerness identity is marginal, dysfunctional and difficult to categorize or recognize, as it exists at a subtle level to which most people don't pay attention. The members of her group of protesters are also from similar classes, so when they are hiding in the government building in scene 3, they didn't expect the occupation to arouse huge attention and support. These three friends (ANDY, BILLY and CHERRY) are all based on real people from the Sunflower Movement: ANDY corresponds to Fei-Fan Lin who was the leader of the movement. After it ended, he was reported to have received unidentified funds to study abroad; BILLY corresponds to Wei-Ting Chen, who was also a leader of the movement. He later participated in elections for City councillor, when he was found to have multiple sexual harassment records and finally was forced to drop out. And CHERRY corresponds to Qiao-An Liu, who was called the Sunflower Goddess by the media because she was photographed and found to be beautiful. After the movement, it was revealed that she had participated in prostitution and intermediary prostitution. Before they participated in the Sunflower Movement, these three people were nobodies; they never know that their private history or privacy will be publicly viewed, or that they would have to explain or even apologize to the society. This shows that the heroic image they showed to the media in the movement was not their real-self, but an imaginary ideal belief projection.

The media is inherently consumer-oriented. In the Internet age, the competition for survival in this sector is intense, which makes them (like politicians) only report the news their readers want to see. In some instances, the media may even make reports that create panic; polls then reflect these concerns; and such concerns are regarded as support for further reporting on the subject (Caplan, 2007: 23, 2016).

Taiwan's social culture had reached a high level of networking, especially among the

young generations. This makes it extremely easy to generate idolatry for media and Internet celebrities. However, the prevalence of the Internet and social media is accompanied by the deterioration of independent thinking and judgment. An example is the 'lazy bag', widely circulated on the Internet during the Sunflower Movement. This claims to explain the complicated trading-bill process in a few minutes, but of course it cannot be done. This kind of simplified populism distrusts professional politicians, but also shows that many protesters and students are not willing to think seriously and are participating in the protests as if they were some sort of hilarious carnival. For example, student leaders auctioned their shirts and panties online to raise funds, and a celebrity promised to take off her bra on the live broadcast if the people gathered reached a certain number. The content is empty gossip, catering to the tastes of internet viewers. Just like in Ravenhill's works, these characters trade their bodies for money and in the end lost bodily autonomy. These participants and performers are both enjoying the thrill of Internet volume and heat, but lose their autonomy of expression and thought. For most participants, they feel involved in major events of politics, but they are still marginal and irrelevant (Lu, 2014: 20-33).

Therefore, in scene 7, in the frenetic atmosphere of winning, I decided that the leader of the whole movement, GREEN's boyfriend ANDY, would share a packet of drugs he accidentally found with all the comrades, to celebrate this rare success. The leaders of the populist movement often have the charisma described by Max Weber, creating awe, admiration and blind faith among followers, and making them less likely to be opposed or questioned (Weber, 1968: 241-245; Willner, 1984: 7, 202-203; Taggart, 2005: 139). ANDY's followers are young and full of ideals but also powerless and tense. If they want to cause real change, they need more support or attention, which means they have to be more aggressive. This is overwhelming, and drugs become the best way to escape from reality. When GREEN angrily asks how

they can use drugs at this moment, CHERRY replies that her true mood is under the influence of drugs. As in the long-term confrontation with the government, she has realized the cruelty of the universe and feels disappointed with reality. This is also a crucial logical problem for the Sunflower Movement: that is, the protesters believed that the Legislative Yuan did not allow opposing parties to participate, therefore it was not legislatively representative. However, after they occupied the Legislative Yuan, they also limited the interpretation of “citizenship” only to the people who identified as Taiwanese and anti-China, thus again silencing those who held opposing views. The slogan “Be a Taiwanese first and then a citizen” limited interaction, thus failing to challenge the hegemony as intended (Miessen, 2010: 81).

Compared to the other leaders, CHERRY didn’t actually know how to achieve their purpose, or what to do after the protest. She just went along with the team and follows orders; however, as the weakest person among them, she feels there will be no happy ending in the real world for her, because the dilemma she faces is one that she is incapable of solving. Therefore, even a short moment of happiness is something she doesn’t want to miss. When she mumbles ‘This is the first time in my life, for so long, I feel I like myself’ (198) we cannot see the righteous or noble value of liberation, but the result of obedience to people’s desires. CHERRY represents the thoughtlessness of modern society. Under liberalism, they lack direction in terms of how to act. A very similar situation also occurred within the real Sunflower Movement: after the occupation of the Legislative Yuan, the media found that many young people brought beer into the venue and held a celebration party. Some sent selfies to social media showing that they had deliberately damaged the building. The mentality behind such behaviour is what I wanted to express through CHERRY’s confession, as some of the protesters are selfish and narcissistic individualists. This fact makes GREEN very upset, and she insists on returning the backpack to where ANDY found it,

disregarding the others, because she still believes there's hope for those with a marginal identity as CHRIS once did. However, she is then caught by DOG, who forces her to inject an excessive amount of drugs that makes her fall into a coma. In this coma, GREEN meets her revolutionary idol, CHRIS, and also has a collapse of faith, as discussed below. When GREEN wakes up, she finds that everything is over. In scene 15 she learns that ANDY accepted the government's offer to retreat from the building; BILLY broke faith with him for that; and her best friend CHERRY is having an affair with ANDY. The trading deal they once opposed will be passed soon and the close circle of friendships is suddenly broken and cannot be repaired. This group of marginal protestors were separated into two paths: one using drugs to relax, and one (GREEN) attempting to do the right thing, which ultimately leads her to break into the building again and set a bigger fire this time.

In *Voting and Fucking*, I also depict a collapsed family relationship that makes parents lose their functions, and results in the abnormal sexual attraction between stepdad and son (TOM and BLUE). The home/nation structure here uses home as a national allegory, which means the power structure within the family is equivalent to the ideological structure within the political system. This can be exemplified by the concept of 'withdrawing families', as argued by the psychoanalyst and social philosopher Erich Fromm in *The Art of Loving* (1956). Fromm describes a prevalence in many families of using punishment. When a father is pleased with a son's conduct he praises him, gives him presents and affection; but whenever the son displeases him, the father withdraws or scolds. When the son succeeds he feels happy, secure and satisfied. But when he makes a mistake, fails, or does not succeed in pleasing father, he feels deflated, unloved, cast out (Fromm, 1956: 88). Fromm believes such a family is a mark of the advent of capitalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie:

I love you *because* you fulfil my expectations, because you do your duty, because you are like me [...] obedience becomes the main virtue [and] disobedience is the main sin—and its punishment the withdrawal of fatherly love. (39)

In Fromm's theory, the capitalization of the external world changes the relationship between father and son to a property-like relationship. In *Voting and Fucking*, the liberation movement has successfully destroyed the shackles of totalitarianism, but it has also irreparably disintegrated BLUE's family. Her father was put in jail and is lost; and her mother LILIAN pursues her own political desires, presenting herself (falsely) as a perfect housewife and liberal mother to cater to her supporters. In many scenes, TOM, BLUE and GREEN mention that she's always busy and pays no attention to her family.

BLUE's queer characteristic is his indifference to everything around him and his tendency to be depressed. The prototype is found in Gary in *Shopping and Fucking*. Both suffer sexual assault by their stepfather and after failing to find help, they escape from their own families. I want to clarify that what makes these two characters collapse is not that they were sexually violated, but because they were helpless after the violation. Gary spends the whole play trying to find a father figure to 'own' him and take care of him again; I believe this is not Stockholm syndrome but a self-defence mechanism, automatically created after being ruthlessly betrayed. In the case of Gary, he is disappointed by the social worker asking him if he would bring a leaflet back to show his father, which is both ignorant and completely ineffectual. The government system supposed to be helping victims of abuse fails him. Similarly, BLUE is wounded by his mother's response, which is built on selfish considerations and distrust of her own child. When BLUE asks for help, LILIAN firstly refuses to believe him, and finally looks at him in a hateful and resentful manner, saying 'I wish

you had never been born' (206) (Thomas, 2012: 195). He then becomes confused: was he raped like he thought, or (as others told him) lying to get his mother's attention? This made BLUE really troubled and isolated in the play. The only connection between him and the rest of the world is his sister GREEN, who is the only one willing to trust him.

The 'queerness' emerges in response to the capitalistic society, which eliminates the meaning of family and causes a lack of emotional connection between family members. Eventually the possibility of love between people is lost. Everyone falls into a lonely identity, so in addition to embracing the value of capitalism, some of them can only choose to escape into indulgent and irresponsible behaviour. However, queer identity is not about a single narrative; multiple stories need to be brought together. These are sometimes internally connected, sometimes isolated, and sometimes conflicting and acts as a significant reminder of the importance of looking at the others' position: the first step towards reconciliation. In the context of Taiwan, as explained in Chapter Two, the process of democratization caused Taiwanese to lose their 'roots' for a long time, complicating their sense of national identity and causing them to doubt those with vested interests in politics. When people are dissatisfied with election results, such issues will always be a tool that can be used to manipulate them, and 'the people', who actually play an insignificant role in the political world, are unconsciously radicalised.

The Taiwanese are easily manipulated by ideology, perhaps because they are so used to being the descendants of victims of political oppression. Demanding that the KMT government apologize and compensate victims and their families is alive in the collective memory as part of the common pursuit of democracy and openness. This is exactly what Badiou pointed out in *Metapolitics* (2005): after a revolution in the name of emancipation, brave people are sacrificed and war for justice and freedom

eventually brought about a state bureaucracy; and the revolutionary ideology is weakened and dispelled by the stable system (Badiou, 2005: 69-70). Especially when political parties that once fought one another hold power, they cease to advocate the previous political opinions and policies, appearing to their supporters that there was no real ideology beyond wanting their votes. Amidst such disappointment and frustration, an identity crisis can arise (Wu, 2002: 168-169, 172). However, there is a blind spot for the Taiwanese, as we are also the heirs of the dictators and perpetrators, as much as the heirs of their victims. As the JAILOR's story about totalitarian rule explains, at the time it intended to fight external aggressors: the KMT's high-pressure control was inseparable from the Japanese invasion of China during the Second World War and the subsequent war with the Communist Party. When GREEN plans to set fire to the parliament building (as a symbol of democratization), and BLUE decides to stay with her, I want my audience to question the progress of 'democratization' if it makes people as alienated and desperate as the time of the White Terror (CHRIS commits suicide in prison) or the martial law era (MARK's bomb). How different are we? Why did these predecessors sacrifice their own lives to make a world that we still want to destroy? There can be no easy answers or closure on such complicated themes unless we face these historical experiences.

4-2-2 The traumatized past in *Voting and Fucking*

As I analysed in Chapter Two, Ravenhill often gives traumatic pasts to characters who make unreasonable or irresponsible decisions; inaction of the previous generation and family incapacitation both cause a sense of powerlessness at the core of his characters. For example at the end of *Shopping and Fucking*, Gary forces Mark to use a knife in order to have sex with him. This related to specific memories of his stepdad visiting him every midnight with different tools, but at other times Ravenhill doesn't explain precisely what happened in the past. For example, with Paul from *The Cut*, we only know he's the practitioner of a governmental instrument to punish opponents as a process of oppression with this horrifying name 'The Cut'. However, operating this tool has ruined his relationship with his family, as his wife doesn't know what he does, but only that he can't stop crying. He cannot communicate with his son and they cannot understand each other. In this way, Ravenhill rationalizes grotesque or excessive plotlines and makes each character's past an essential part of the analysis. In *Voting and Fucking*, I adapt this strategy to discuss the relationship between ourselves and the political environment, forming a dialectical relationship between those characters, the environment they live in and their past experience. The reason for the family disability in my story relates to the history of political unrest and the sense of subjective loss caused by internal struggle, represented by LILIAN and MARK and their pasts: MARK was in jail, whereas LILIAN was always busy with elections. These prevented them from becoming good parents: when BLUE asks for help to escape TOM's sexual harassment, his mother LILIAN doesn't believe him and send him to psychiatric hospital to protect her campaign. The young have been neglected, just as modern democratic politics has neglected young Taiwanese. The constant collision between the individual and history is the only method to destroy the deep roots of the democratic myth, and reaffirm the identity of the individual and the

historical subject.

The first kind of traumatized past in *Voting and Fucking* is the violent oppression of history, underpinning the entire storyline. This is also a social phenomenon as Taiwanese literary scholar Fang-Ming Chen explains: the martial law system brought harm and distortion to the mind and personality of Taiwanese society, causing the Taiwanese to suffer from ‘Historical amnesia’ as a result of long-term restraint and imprisonment of bodies, thinking and writing, due to authoritarian rule. So when the Taiwanese finally retrieve the memory of history through means such as literary forms, this does not mean that they can achieve complete and objective historical fact. Personal memory tends to be fragmented during the martial law period, and

when there is a gap in the memory reconstruction process, many fictional imaginations and simulated plots may also penetrate. After the real and fictional narratives are mixed, it is impossible to be a restoration of history, but a representation of history. (Chen, 2002: 109-110)

Therefore, the shadow of persecution from the past is present whenever anyone collides with the government. For example, in scene 1, MARK finds GREEN breaking into the building and painting CHRIS’s icon on the wall. When MARK tells her that’s forbidden, GREEN responds: ‘Without her [CHRIS] we would never have had this.’(165) This corresponds to Taiwanese activists or politicians manipulating or utilizing the traumatic past, for example criticizing the former autocratic government as a signified evil representation to establish a sense of identity, or using the name ‘Transformed Justice’ against political opponents. Some politicians or scholars overly simplified the tragedies of the Taiwanese democratization process. As the 28th *February accident* is described as a legendary justice war between freedom and slavery, the *White Terror* is described as an arrogant foreign regime’s means of

controlling native objections. This collective victim psychology can be strengthened during an election and easily manipulated. For example, in September 2018, an internal conference leaked a recording of the Transitional Justice Commission which became the biggest scandal of the year. It revealed the deputy chairman Tian-Qin Zhang and other commissioners directly discussing that their purpose is pursuing truth or justice, but how to help their candidate to win, through using the fact that their opponent was once a police officer in charge of arresting Nan-Rong Zheng. Zheng was one of the most important fighters who sacrificed himself for Taiwanese freedom of speech, setting himself on fire in protest at the court transfer order in 1989. Zheng was deified as a saint of Taiwanese democratization and his picture was put on the centre table during the Sunflower's occupation; the leader of the Sunflower, Fei-Fan Lin, quotes his words to encourage others: 'Zheng, Nan-Rong once said: "The rest, is your business."' And now, it's our business.'



▲ Zheng, Nan-Rong's picture was put in the centre during the Sunflower Movement's occupation.

However, these vengeful ideologies adopted by those students might give them the illusion that they have inherited the traumatized identities of victims, which

automatically justified aggression or even violence when they confront governmental forces. For example, in *Voting and Fucking* scene 9, BLUE asks MARK: 'Have you seen that there is a dead mouse hanging outside at the front door?' (192). MARK tells him those excited youths caught a mouse in the chamber and sentenced it to death as a symbol of the rotten government and voted to decide how it will be executed. This small episode reveals a hidden uneasiness that after gaining power, these students immediately start to resemble the brutal government CHRIS once opposed. In scene 11, under the influence of drugs, GREEN travels back to meet her political idol CHRIS, whose prototype is based on Nan-Rong Zheng, just before she burned herself to ashes. GREEN surprisingly discovered, in the final moment, that CHRIS is hesitant and scared just like a normal human before her death. GREEN tries to reassure her by telling her the future is much better because of her, and 'The school teaches you, the park has your statue, and we remember. So believe me, you are not sacrificing for nothing' (218). But then GREEN realized that she is telling the poor woman to set herself on fire, and that GREEN even doesn't believe what she told CHRIS. She knows things are not getting better, so she feels desperate and wants to burn herself in scene 17. In the first version of scene 11, CHRIS did not even want to commit suicide, and finally was forced by her comrades and the police because doing so is good for both sides. This idea comes from Taiwanese historical scholar Ao Li. Li was a friend of Zheng and stated that Zheng was locked in the office by his own people and that sprinkling gasoline was originally intended to deter the police; however, the fire was accidentally started and quickly became out of control. Although Li's speculation is not proven, it is possible to be the ordinary truth of the legendary tragedy. Here, I want to reflect on images of the White terror era in comparison to what we are now. I want my audience to see those martyrs with humanity, fear and regret; and for those youths to attempt to put themselves in that situation and experience what have they

suffered. Their sacrifice should not be regarded as an imagined heroic story, but a common tragic experience. When we are enjoying the fruits of the sacrifices of our predecessors, can we truthfully say whether their sacrifices were in vain?

Ironically, when those young political dissidents were busy taking over the government, the real victim of the earlier autocratic regime, MARK, is working as a guard for the government building. MARK is derived from Nick in Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids*, who was once a left-wing radical activist, and now been released from prison and tried to reintegrate into society. Faced with the new democratic world he always imagined, he only feels confused and alienated. The narrative of MARK's character in this play is a flashback. He is introduced as part of the national machine, wearing a uniform and trying to chase GREEN away at the beginning. We learn later that he has a history with LILIAN, and that she helped him to get this job after being released from prison. He tells GREEN what happened to him while he was in prison: that he lost everyone important to him and cannot even remember what they look like. Finally, in scene 13, he confesses to BLUE and GREEN what cause he suffered for. The crime he had committed is pursuing liberalization. When he was an idealistic college student, in order to fight the government arrests of teachers and friends, he set a bomb underneath the statue of the dictator. As he says: 'Just like breaking down the Berlin Wall, to prove that there is possibility' (226). However, an accident happened, which took two people's lives, and he chose to take responsibility himself. This is adapted from the first Taiwanese political bomber, Ru-Men Yang; between 2003 to 2004, he set seventeen explosive devices in Taipei, and left notes that read 'anti-imported rice' and 'government should take care of the people' to require the government to pay attention to Taiwan's open rice imports; therefore, the police and media called him the 'white rice bomber.' Yang was arrested in 2004 and pardoned by President Shui-Bian Chen in 2007. As the first political prisoner to use bombs, Yang

has become an idol of the social movement, publishing books, making movies, and expressing views on political events on television or the internet. However, what if the bomb at that time caused casualties? Would we still worship a murderer as a hero? MARK did not enjoy such treatment after he returned to a democratic society, which he had fought for half of his lifetime. MARK was cast aside as no-one wants to hire someone with a criminal record. The only person willing to help him is his ex-girlfriend LILIAN, who might only do so to keep him quiet.

MARK's trauma here is described to GREEN in scene 7: after years of imprisonment he finally got the chance to call his parents, and finds both of them have passed away. He no longer remembers their faces, as if they never existed. Here I adapted Victor's polaroid from *Some Explicit Polaroids*. Ravenhill uses the powerful metaphor of instantly gratifying but short-lived images to describe the spiritual states of '90s British pop culture. In my story, a large number of Chinese immigrants retreated to Taiwan after the civil war. Family photos were expensive and rare at the time, but even poor families would take a family portrait. Therefore, there was often one very special photograph. This is why, when MARK is released, he tries every possible way to find the picture of the whole family, and carries it with him continually and carefully: 'And there are my parents, that's how they look. I bring this with me every day, so I will never forget' (194). This implies he is always out of date and living in the past. This is like many mainlanders who retreated to Taiwan with the government. They brought street names with them from China, and maintained their old lifestyle habits in Taiwan. This mentality was used by the government as a means to control people, and as a legitimate source of authoritarian governance to fight against the Communist Party. The young generation of MARK and LILIAN started to fight for autonomy and freedom, with very lofty ideals in their immature hearts.

MARK stopped growing the day he was imprisoned. This can be seen in scene

13, when GREEN tells him their selfish and harsh mother is actually LILIAN. He is unable to believe what she has said, because for him, LILIAN is still the girl: 'she was... a girl with great sense of justice, always taking others' problems seriously; very popular, a nice singer, a film buff' (225). To GREEN, this is like they are talking about totally different people. Hannah Arendt interprets human existences such as MARK's as the 'marginal situation': as a citizen once under totalitarian rule, in order to maintain the integrity of his personal morality, he must withdraw from the political realm. He no longer cares about or participates in public affairs, and thus has given up political responsibility. Arendt argues that this 'marginal situation' might effectively help people with their moral claims, but in the political arena, they become incompetent and use the excuse of isolation. The trouble with this psychology is that it is completely subjective, and authenticity can only be confirmed by a 'willingness to suffer' (Arendt, 2003: 156). Therefore, although MARK has exiled himself from the political realm because of his traumatic memories, when he discovered that the twins have a blood relationship with him, and they were facing such difficulties and frustrations, he once again assumed responsibility, in this case for the arson attack, taking GREEN's place and took all responsibility. As MARK tells GREEN in scene 17, when he finds his daughter is going to burn down the building. He goes from initial incomprehension (in scene 1 he tried to stop her spraypainting a wall); to giving up and drifting into the new generation's revolution carnival; to longing to return to prison; to final acceptance of this new reality: 'After I was released from prison, I always felt that I might have to go back. It like I'm not use to this free world it likes now, and seems to be more comfortable with life inside' (243) he says. The act of giving GREEN the coat with his family photo inside the pocket before they separated, shows that MARK passed on the memories of him and his parents to the next generation. Therefore it is GREEN and BLUE's responsibility to forget or remember

their family's past.

LILIAN is another victim of MARK's story. She is derived from the character Helen in Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids*, who obtains a position inside the government working to make the buses run on time, for which she has to abandon most of her old ideals. I borrow this plot, and adapt it in scene 5, when LILIAN and MARK meet by chance in an elevator, and she tells him that she is busy coordinating issues between foreign companies and the local unions. MARK asks whether that will lead to a lot of unemployment, and she answers: 'Somebody needs to make sure the subway will still be working tomorrow.' (186). She relentlessly refutes MARK was a man of words and not of deeds. Using big slogans and claiming to complete major reforms, Taiwan has been accustomed to grand concepts since the '80s; however, when the political parties rotate, the new ruling party finds that those previous guarantees are often difficult to achieve, so shift the focus to vague ideological issues such as 'transitional justice' for the victims of the old days to seek public support. 'Transitional justice' in Taiwan is not like South Africa's starting point for healing and reconciliation, but more like a retaliatory means to win another election (Hamber, 2001: 246-256; Chirot & Mc Cauley, 2012:174-5). Many ideological supporters of Taiwanese identity saw the government punishing the KMT and its Chinese ideology. They applauded this as 'justice', ignoring the otherwise incompetent rule. As LILIAN says: 'we used to firmly believe that liberation is the perfect answer for everything. But we are still dealing with the consequences. Social disintegration, national identity falling apart, welfare services overstretched' (187).

Finally, she asks: 'MARK? What did you ever do? Talk, march, protest, against this, overthrow that, get wasted and make love with every girl who worshipped you? Tell me one concrete thing you did.' (188). MARK fails to answer. He is trapped in Arendt's 'marginal situation' and LILIAN is showing that she is no longer the little

girl who followed everywhere MARK led, she is more strong and confident, as she says 'you can't imagine how hard that was for a single mother during that time' (188), and she survived. And although LILIAN still wants to make change like they both dreamed once, now she also realized that getting power is the most important priority for her. However, this means that LILIAN becomes more and more like someone she once tried to overthrow as the play goes on. Arendt (2007) argues that the tragic dilemma of political development after a revolution is that it can easily lead to two results. One, as a substitute for direct administration of the people, the representative government can become an administrative organ and the public sphere may disappear, such that there will no longer be any pride or prestige in being a government representative. Two, the people's representatives who want to implement popularized control over the people may struggle to deal with objections. They may ultimately become indifferent, or maintain the spirit of opposition with no practical action (Arendt, 2007:220, 222-223). LILIAN and ANDY are both political leaders who choose a more practical route compared to CHRIS/MARK/GREEN's radical one; However, this play is trying to present the end of one era and the beginning of another, and how the past has paved the way for the outlook of the future. In the new society, personal gratification and pleasure have usurped political idealism, as has happened repeatedly in our history; but people choose to forget and are thus destined to repeat this cycle (Svich, 2003: 90).

LILIAN reflects that she represents many political elites in Taiwan at present, including the so-called 'student movement generation'. It is as if, once the revolutionaries took power, they immediately realize that in fact ruling is difficult and reforming or changing society cannot be achieved in a single step. Ultimately, as the old saying goes, politics is about compromise. However, in a system of continual voting and polling, while the pursuit of compromise can give a politician a greater

chance to seize power, there is no room left for an ideal that cannot be compromised upon. Therefore, throughout the whole play of *Voting and Fucking*, LILIAN never interacts with her children. Instead, she is constantly participating in political programs and variety shows, because in Taiwan people love these. Calling in or leaving messages allows them to feel that they are involved in politics, and LILIAN uses these opportunities to constantly promote herself, including the image of a happy family, perfect housewife and wonderful mother, because she knows what the audience/voter wants to hear or see, and the truth is never important on television. This is similar to Ravenhill's criticisms of the dehumanization in capitalism, which commercialized everything with monetary value. Therefore, no matter what unethical things his characters do, such as using phone sex to pay the bills, it can be justified as a noble trading behaviour. In the world of *Voting and Fucking*, everything can be quantitative by number of votes, and moral value is replaced by these mathematical calculations. In scene 12, through a conversation with DAVE, LILIAN reveals that she is prepared to abandon those who have supported her or promoted her. The object of my insinuation here is the KMT's female presidential candidate Xiu-Zhu Hong in 2016. After the Sunflower Movement, polls showed that support for the KMT's fell dramatically, as shown in many defeats in the following elections. This led to a strange situation, in which no-one was willing to represent the party to campaign; KMT candidates with potential were reluctant to fight, knowing that they were likely to be defeated in the next election. As a result, this female candidate was elected in the party, but as she relied for her popularity on those who had taken pro-China positions in various campaigns, the party was worried, because in total the supporters of such ideology are still few in Taiwan, and her speeches or advocacy might affect other votes, such as the election of mayors or legislators. Eventually, they replaced her a few months before the election. This incident caused great indignation in public

opinion as a serious violation of procedural justice. If the results of a primary election can be changed in this way, what is the purpose of the primary? It can be understood that the consideration of political parties is not only to win the presidency, but to retain seats in Parliament as much as possible, but this still makes people like me deeply doubtful about democratic mechanisms.

One of the most traumatized characters is BLUE, who has a vague and unreliable memory of being raped by his stepfather, TOM. When he first recalled the terrible experience to MARK in scene 9, BLUE was quite certain at the beginning. He tells Mark when he was fourteen, one day, his stepdad walked into his bathroom to take a shower with him, and he kissed and touched him. BLUE sought help from his mother but was ignored, and one-night TOM came into BLUE's room and raped him. Again, in the face of TOM's denial, his mother LILIAN resolutely refused to believe BLUE, who was also unable to offer clear evidence in court. Finally, he was diagnosed as suffering from a delusional disorder and stayed in the hospital for a year. He finally admits to MARK that even he began to doubt the authenticity of what happened. The rape of BLUE symbolizes the absence of truth, as everyone has experienced a common history, but different narrative views are in tension and contradict each other. They cannot all reflect the true reality. The emptiness and suspension of truth is the main issue this play tries to discuss. In scene 16, TOM roughly tells BLUE, as he once told LILIAN: 'The truth is, at the very minutes when you saw me naked, your dick got so hard. Then when I was washing you, you came in my hand. You were so ashamed and cried like a baby so I comforted you' (238). BLUE tries to counterattack; he says: 'Then you forced me to suck you' (238). But TOM reminds BLUE how great their sex was, retelling the whole story of a rape in an entirely new way. BLUE is rendered speechless, which to some extent may appear to confirm TOM's account. As trauma theorist Cathy Caruth explains (1996),

Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on. (Caruth, 1996: 4)

In other words, the person who has experienced this traumatic event is psychically incapable of 'binding' that event or allowing that event to become a part of his or her subjectivity. Because of this, the person, often without being aware that he or she is doing this, re-enacts the traumatic event in different ways as a way of attempting to assimilate it. Therefore, when TOM uses the theory to help him to rebuild his memory, he makes BLUE accept the fact: they were both extremely lonely and needy, longing to be identified, longing to find meaning. TOM says: 'I can see this question in your eyes; you ask yourself these questions because you're feeling lost. I can tell you this because I feel the same thing, just like you. So we have to make up stories to help us move on. And that's the truth' (239). What TOM did to BLUE comes from seeing something common in him; it is a feeling of being lost. And the whole cause of this incident is because of the absence of the parenthood, the dysfunctional family. As BLUE is ruined not because of the sexual relationship with TOM, but the feeling of been given up by his own mother, and the outside world she represented. Therefore, BLUE gradually comes to believe TOM's story and begins to question whether he was seduced rather than raped, thinking about the beauty of the consensual sex.

Ravenhill's dramaturgy creates a sentimental feeling of nostalgia for the past that haunts his characters; they began to create an idealized image of the past, to help them persevere. However, this nostalgia can also trap those characters in a romantic notion of the past, preventing them from making real changes in the present (Urban, 2006: 133-135): sheltering in happy memories, or trying to (re)create the imagined past.

In my play, the characters with troubled memories of their past are used to claiming the identity of a victim, believing that they have no responsibility for bad things that have happened and attributing all the discomforts or irregularities in their life to these events. This is also how many Taiwanese see the country's history: they are willing to believe that there are clearly 'good' and 'bad' people in such conflicts, and they want to be on the good side. However, from a historical perspective, things are often ambiguous with multiple intentions, and everything can be manipulated or interpreted differently. Therefore, the point should not be what historical texts are credible, but how to interpret them. There is no sure source of information: all sources of information are questionable (Baudrillard, 2002: 88; Gellner, 1992: 80). BLUE remembers that when he was being ignored by his mother, TOM kept him company: the relationship between the two may not be completely forced. In scene 17, BLUE confesses to GREEN that he cannot remember what really happened at that time. He now feels pity, because he realized that they were both young and abandoned (Sierz, 2001: 142). It seems everyone is culpable in this state, and BLUE asking TOM for help is a backward step. However, the fundamental reason that he agrees to take the pills when TOM finally asks him to is his inability to solve his sister's problems. Here, BLUE took an important step, as he accepted the possibility that he might have made mistakes but he still plans to live well with the traumatic memories. Maybe there are no moral victories to be won.

4-2-3 Witnessing and suffering in *Voting and Fucking*

It is sometimes difficult to directly present violence, conflict or sex on stage. Doing so may lead the audience to laugh or feel alienated, more importantly, it might make people feel that they cannot believe what they are watching. Mark Ravenhill developed the method of the ‘witness stand’ as discussed before in Chapter 2-4 *Witnessing and Suffering*, which provided not only an experiential structure, but also an imaginative hook for his audience. This allows them to see that extreme violence might actually happen in the Capitalist world, through a form of re-telling and re-imagining (Nevitt, 2013: 42). The aim is to force the audience to reflect on the reality they live in; the political anger voiced by their predecessors through protest and face-to-face social action is now displaced through personal acts of physical and psychological violence. In *Voting and Fucking*, the characters are living in a democratic society, but violence still appears here with different faces, derived from the sense of powerlessness. In terms of violence, my adaptation makes use of many plot-points and characters from Ravenhill’s work, in the context of Taiwanese local society (Murphy, 2013: 126-127). This has the advantage of being able to dispel the preconceived notions of the Taiwanese audience, thinking that the work is for specific political interest groups, and instead of trying to cultivate a broader and more universal perspective. Ravenhill uses the violence of everyday events to shock his audience. He does not present an easy moral argument in these events: his work is always pivoting to unearth something darker and less definable at its core. Ambiguity is an important queer trait (Svich, 2003: 90).

There are two kinds of violence presented in this work: personal and environmental. This is based on the observation of contemporary Taiwanese social movements and democratic politics. For personal violence, I emphasize the causal relationship between the injurer and victim as the contexts to reveal the reasons for

suffering; they live in a modern, progressive society, which as Neil Postman explains (2009) is the era of exploding information and excessive entertainment. This makes people increasingly passive and selfish, and we may be destroyed by the things that amuse us (Postman, 2009: 6). As mentioned earlier, in scene 15, TOM convinces BLUE that what happened between them was not a rape, and there are possibilities between two of them still; he then takes a small pack of pills out, and tells BLUE this is some extra compensation. They call it 'sugar.' In great pain, people naturally want to escape, and drugs are the simplest and fastest way to paralyze the senses. If entertainment is used to temporarily escape from suffering, it is hard to differentiate between entertainment and torture anymore; the old boundary has been destroyed. BLUE doesn't just take one pill; to a certain extent, he chooses to believe or even 'join' TOM's story. Therefore, in this picture of happy self-destruction, I want my audience to recognize that 'people are not innocent' and that the identities of the victim and the injurer may coexist.

TOM metaphorically represents the military forces of the earlier totalitarian regime, which has to be cruel to the national enemies, but at the same time lacks autonomy. This is like the countless soldiers, police officers, even government officials who have worked under the totalitarian government in Taiwan as part of the unjust ruling structure. After the collapse of the totalitarian regime, how can they find reconciliation with someone who might have been victimized by their regime? In scene 4, TOM says BLUE reminds him of his childhood. He talks about his father, who was also a soldier, a tough and masculine guy, and how he wanted to make him happy. TOM entered military school even he hated it. However, his mother disappeared when he was eighteen, and this broke his father, who became an alcoholic. One night TOM accidentally saw his father pointing a gun at himself. Up until that night, his father seemed completely normal but in a sudden, '*Snap-finger*)

He lost it' (182). TOM also feels this potential in BLUE, which leads to their following complex relationship. In earlier drafts, I considered making BLUE female, because the motivation and possibility of homosexuality are intuitively different from a heterosexual relationship. However, gender fluidity is also a distinct characteristic of Ravenhill's work and by normalizing same-sex relationships, Ravenhill presents common temptations or struggles in the face of love and sensuality, separate from gender. Here, I want to focus on this feeling of lost identity, as TOM's father represents the generation of soldiers who follow the government and retreated to Taiwan in 1949 with their children in tow, including many like TOM.

Another violent scene in this play begins when ANDY inadvertently picks up a backpack of drugs and shares it with others in the occupation. This introduces the most threatening character in this play, DOG, who is based on the boss Brian in Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking*, who symbolizes the loss of humanity in the commercialization of capitalism. For him, money is the civilization, and making money is written in the first line of his new bible. DOG is a drug dealer, representing the ultimate personalization of liberalism. Like Brian, he works to raise his family and is willing to use all means to protect them. In scene 6, DOG is beating and torturing the delivery MAN to locate his stuff; what makes him angry is not about the loss of wealth but credibility. When DOG firstly rebukes the MAN, it sounded like a normal company manager, he says: 'It's sad. We once believed in people, men trusted each other by simply shaking hands, with respect. But now, so disappointed' (190) Then, he punishes John with a hammer and says 'John. I believe you're. I really do. And I'm sorry too. I'm not doing this on purpose either' (191). DOG shows no mercy. He even encourages the MAN to finish his praying, because he wants to know what God will do to stop them. After trying to drown MAN several times, he eventually violently kills him, partly as a means of making his meeting with GREEN more frightening.

When GREEN visits DOG to return the backpack in scene 10, the TV in the basement is showing the news of a slaughter on the other side of the world, which makes the atmosphere more intense. DOG changes the channel to show GREEN his daughter's violin performance. He listens intently and says: 'It's beautiful, isn't it? It makes you remember something we've lost. Something beautiful that you lost but forgot that you had ever had' (209) As a father, DOG tells GREEN how proud he is of his girl, whom he sends to the best music school in the country. Then, he changes the channel to a video of him beating the MAN and explains to her that he had to punish him to preserve his reputation. He says: 'I hate violence. But sometimes it's necessary. It changes things. Because people are always greedy, selfish, and full of lies; I can't trust anyone anymore, but I can trust violence. (*Beat*) If I don't do this, my business will be eliminated sooner or later by my competitors. I won't let their selfishness or lies destroy the life I've made for my daughter' (211). This may sound like sarcasm, as ultimately they are both using the same method to achieve their goals. The character's name DOG is from a real Taiwanese underworld boss, An-Le Zhang, whose nickname is 'White Wolf'. After the announcement of the withdrawal of the gang, he organized a pro-China party called the China Unification Promotion Party. During the Sunflower occupation, he organized many aggressive marches and caused conflict with the supporters of the Sunflower Movement. As he said, it is legal for him, as a citizen to protest against those who violated the law by (in this case) occupying the government building. In the play DOG finally forces GREEN to inject an overdose of drugs as a punishment, which causes her to fall into a coma; in the later plots, there were hints that at this time, DOG and his men molested her and took photos while she is comatose. GREEN seems like the most innocent character in the whole play, and should not deserve to be treated with violence because she's trying to return something that doesn't belong to her and is advising her friends not to take

drugs. However, letting her encounter all of these are precisely because she insists on doing the right thing she believes. In the first version, I wrote the process relatively straightforwardly, but I deleted the paragraph later; which is corresponding to my analysis in Chapter 2-4, as Edward Bond's using Cordelia's suffering by soldiers, or the cruelly blinding of upright Gloucester in *Lear*. I'm more appreciating Ravenhill's strategy of allowing the audience to imagine what suffering might be undergone by a character they have learned to like. This can be more effective to force people's reflection than the direct presentation of atrocities.

The inspiration to juxtapose GREEN with earlier time and space during her coma is from Ravenhill's short play *A Bigger Banner* (2011). In this play, there is a student movement in which people occupied a university administration building, and one of the protesters, Shona, accidentally met Marge and Fred from the past, who were also protesting against the totalitarian government. I gave a lot of thought to how to render the visions of this encounter, where as mentioned, CHRIS is based on the real figure, Nan-Zhen Zheng. Therefore, in the first draft I set this scene in Zheng's locked office, just before the self-immolation happened. I want to discuss the deep anxiety and frustration of a real person, to dig the dark side of a martyr. However, after detailed consideration I decided to move the background of this scene forward to the date around the *Formosa Incident* (1979), during the White Terror, to confuse the character's face; in order not to be associated as using the misfortune of the deceased, or cause unnecessary disputes with Zheng's worshipers or families. And the encounters and torture methods in the prison refer to the interviews and diaries of Yi-Xiong Lin; and the YOUTH who decides to hang himself is copied from Ming-Zheng Shih's novel *The One Thirst of Death* (1981), which argued that life under an authoritarian regime is not worth living. Again, those scenes of torture and rape are not directly presented to the audience. Instead, I am trying to create an atmosphere of

fear and despair of the environmental violence with the humming of *Song of the Covered Wagon*.

Because the setting is GREEN's coma, I intend to let the actors play other corresponding characters, such as the reincarnation of the foregoing life and this life. CHRIS is played by the actress also playing LILIAN; YOUTH by BLUE; MAN by MARK; and JAILOR by TOM. In this scene, the first thing GREEN hears is CHRIS arguing with her companion YOUTH, who, like BLUE, is implicated in a political movement he doesn't care about. CHRIS tries to comfort him but YOUTH has been scared by reality, as many innocent people were killed in front of his eyes. Through his regret and selfishness, I tried to represent small figures, who have human weaknesses and deceive each other to achieve their goals. Things keep getting worse, when the JAILOR brings the MAN back and takes YOUTH out. The old man warns CHRIS that the soldiers will break her and have left her to last because they know she is weak. He hints that it would be easier for her to commit suicide; after a few minutes the YOUTH and MAN have both been executed, and the JAILOR returns. CHRIS has the opportunity to hang herself with a belt, but hesitates, full of doubt. After a conversation with GREEN about the future after their sacrifice and with the melody of '*Song of the covered wagon*' playing she accepts GREEN's beautiful fantasy and dies. The song was popular when Japan occupied Taiwan, and was sung by prisoners before and during executions, as described earlier (See Lan, 2006). I quote the song here to connect this dramatic picture with real moments in Taiwanese history. I repeatedly emphasize not to make these sacrifices in vain, rather than some political performances in Taiwan that focus on the cruelty of sacrifice itself, to accuse the authoritarian regime behind it.

The environmental violence that I present is the violence of the state machinery, by which I mean the means used by the government to maintain peace, especially in

the post-war framework of Taiwan. The suppression of civil riots by the state often caused more victims than the riots themselves, which the government generally described as ‘returning to normality’, calling the riots illegitimate because they threaten the state and its monopoly on violent force (Van Der Veer, 1996: 250-251). The government has to monopolize violence by suppressing violence between individuals and groups in society. For example, for the JAILOR who is also a professional soldier, he represents national stability, in his interactions with CHRIS, we can find contradictory ideas based on what he once suffered in his hometown. As introduced in Chapter One, the Republic of China has experienced aggression and civil war for more than a decade, whereas Taiwan was relatively stable and peaceful as a Japanese colony. Therefore, a cognitive gap between the two is inevitable. With the experience of surviving from the battlefield, the JAILOR knows protectors can’t be just gentle. However, this mentality prevented him from interfering when CHRIS was abused, and after all he says only ‘Hope you understand. It’s nothing personal. I don’t like what they did to your people. (*Beat*) Sorry it has to be like this’ (217). This is extended from Hannah Arendt’s discussion of a harmless little bureaucrat whose behavioural motives are purely ‘mundane desires’, but who might commit the most fierce crimes in a totalitarian environment. This person is neither a demon, pervert nor sadist: his motives are nothing but ambition, flattering his superiors and career advancement. Therefore, Arendt claims that even if the totalitarian regime has collapsed, the potential for such crimes still exists (Bernstein, 2002: 232-233).

The environmental violence here is actually political violence. This is a paradox, as the tendency of violence is to destroy politics, and the tendency of politics is to end violence (Ayyash, 2013: 342). I am imitating the development of democracy across these three Taiwanese generations as history seems to repeat itself. Since violence is primarily marked by its tools, it fails to disrupt the status quo in a positive or

progressive manner and only inevitably leads to more destruction (Arendt, 1969: 52-3). With CHRIS's self-immolation, MARK's bomb attack and GREEN's final arson, I want to ask whether this threat of violence will ever disappear. Or, is DOG right that 'people are always greedy, selfish, and full of lies' (210), so we are destined to be regulated by violence? This question might be answered by Jean Baudrillard's analyses in *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2002), in which he argues that hostility is omnipresent in the era of globalization: a fight between terror and terror in which the most frightening experience of all is death (41-42). Baudrillard believes the victory of terrorism is to make everyone feel horrified and voluntarily destroy the original stable order to cope with this sudden sense of crisis (89). The world can never go back to how it was before a terrorist attack, much as people in the Sunflower Movement seem to change, with less concern about what those changes might mean. At the end of scene 11, GREEN tells CHRIS she has dreamed about the future, in which everything is better; people are allowed to say or think anything they want, there will be no more police violence and people can decide their leader by vote. When CHRIS hears that, she accidentally drops the lighter, cries and tells GREEN she's scared. However, at that moment, GREEN is still doing the right thing (she believes): she hands the lighter to CHRIS, and promises her that, after her sacrifice, the revolution will succeed and (again) her sacrifice will not be for nothing. After GREEN awakes from the coma, and returns to the camp in scene 15, her faith was shattered and she realizes she told a lie to CHRIS. This is the last straw that convinces her to take the path of destruction, in scene 17. GREEN, who has always advocated reason and righteousness, decides to burn down the parliament building to create some change, which she does with the same lighter from scene 11. This implies inheritance, but also repetition.

To conclude, the violence in this play is not about the violent images, but to experience repeated violent actions at different times, to know and listen to

perpetrators and victims, and understand that they are actually ordinary people, similar to us. By witnessing people's suffering and sacrifice, I want my audience to admit there is no 'good' violence; once someone claims that change can only come as a result of 'good' violence, each of us will find it easy to use these claims to rationalize our own violent behavior. There is no true story of violence: it is a total phenomenon, with no plot and no narrative, only traces that lead nowhere (Van Der Veer, 1996: 269). In my work, the JAILOR uses torture to protect his country; MARK uses bombs against tyranny; even DOG uses violence to protect his family. Essentially, the foundation and structure of socialization are precisely characterized by the abandonment of violence; contemporary Taiwanese society has resulted in discussions that cannot achieve progress without using extreme methods, as represented by the Sunflower Movement. I want to remind the audience that violence is just a default for impotence; violence is effective, but it does not mean it is right. In my play, CHRIS asks GREEN whether they are living in an ideal society in which no-one has to make sacrifices for freedom anymore. Her hesitation and embarrassment are exactly what I wanted the audience to experience. We can't just feel angry or mourn the unfortunate, but we must act.

4-2-4 Survival as a political tactic in *Voting and Fucking*

In the original design, *Voting and Fucking* was a political allegory about a broken family, which contains many storylines concerning different members. The climax is the youngest daughter, who was initially positive and naive, but who eventually detonates a bomb in the parliament building while everyone else is having dinner. In the first version, the story ended with the explosion in scene 17. I hoped to provoke the audience with devastation. However, I changed my mind after I read *Shopping and Fucking*, in which Gary says: 'I want it over. And there's only one ending.' (85) He begs Mark to end his life, because Gary is already sick inside and doesn't have the tools to cope with this sadness (Thomas, 2012:198). Mark finally does what he is asked off stage, returning with blood on his face; it seems that there is no hope left for him. However, in the next scene, Mark is sitting with his adopted queer children at a table, sharing microwave food together. As I discussed in Chapter 2-5, microwave food was designed for one person and the play has established that it is 'unshareable'; but now they are willing to feed each other. The uniqueness of Ravenhill's dramaturgy is that he always creates tension in his work in the simultaneous embrace of pleasure and commerce and an utter disdain for them; this is a kind of oblique consciousness of the 'queer identity' (Svich, 2003: 93). However, this is also what I felt about Taiwan's political situation; there are more than a dozen television stations in Taiwan that broadcast political commentary programs, and countless commentary programs on the Internet; our audience seems to be accustomed to participating in politics in this way of watching a performance. In elections, many people only look at the colours of political parties and there are advertisements of candidates with the titles of male gods or goddesses in the campaign slogans. Politics becoming entertainment has become a warning for the residents of post-democracy Taiwan. This concept of democracy also relies on a fictional Grand Narrative: that everyone has the right to vote and everyone

has equal influence. However, in order to truly practice democracy, there must be two conditions: a reasonable number of stakeholders to keep the system under control, and a lack of influence from external forces such as the media (Miessen, 2010: 82-3) I want to find this way, to make my characters have a chance to survive in this disturbing and unsatisfied environment.

Thus, in the final version. Before GREEN sets the building on fire, BLUE arrives. Twins function in drama as two halves of the same subject, also alluding to the two parties that GREEN and BLUE represent are products of the same society; less one, the society is incomplete, just like democracy can't exist with only one party. And in here, when they're facing the greatest difficulties in their life, without functional family and living in the margins, BLUE and GREEN they can only rely on each other. As BLUE told MARK in scene13, GREEN was a superhero to him: 'Just when I thought there would be no one left for me, GREEN came. She's the only one who trusted me, protected me, and helped me to put myself together. Like those heroes, like *Batman*. She did that not because of some accidental blood relationship, but because of something more' (228). and MARK asks what he means, and he replies, 'Because she knew I was in need, and she chose to hold my hand tight'(228). GREEN helps her brother is not a simple taking of sides, but will also bear consequences, such as losing contact with their families. But by making this choice, it shows her autonomy, as she always knows what the right thing to do is. Therefore, at the final moment when her political will is collapsing, BLUE appears and clasps her hand, as they did when they were children, and promises he will accompany her and take the consequences with her. The lesson here is simple: as Immanuel Kant explains, enlightenment is possible when every adult is unconstrained by the guidance of others. Individual freedom is not accepted by the community, those in power, or any other source of opinion other than one's own judgment (Kant, 1784: 85-92).

‘Independent thinking’ is not repeating something you read on Twitter or Facebook, or joining something popular to show off. Modern society has embraced multiple values of secularization, pluralization, privatization, as well as losing its Grand Narratives. Democratic liberalism can only achieve a kind of small citizen’s small fortunate democracy. It is easy to become empty and irresponsible (Lu, 2014: 7). The first corrective step is to think independently and take the consequences of one’s decisions.

This unity of the twins gives them some kind of stability and courage to move on. In fact, I have considered this change many times. Is it right to imply that the separated Taiwanese ideologies can so easily reach reconciliation? By standing together to figure it out? However, after the influence of the Sunflower Movement, more and more people started to notice our particular circumstance, which in the face of overwhelming pressure from China, the domestic populism has caused the disability of democracy which once we believe it can protect Taiwanese from the Totalitarian violence. This is why I think the theoretical Queer’s Journey should be introduced to Taiwan, for those people who are confused or frustrated by their identity crisis, by recognizing this ‘queerness’ of our identity, it might help us to break the boundary, and form a new collective “us”; as at the end of *Mother Clap’s Molly House* in which Mrs. Tull and Princess Seraphina find contentment in their relationship. Princess Seraphina takes off his dress and Mrs. Tull looks at him and tells him she finds his feminine side just as attractive as his masculinity: ‘Man... Woman... Hermaphrodite. Want them all. All of you’ (99). I want my Taiwanese compatriots to accept each other in the same way (Bathurst, 2005: 211).

Some questions might be asked, such as how can BLUE forgive TOM? As in my first version, BLUE was dark and self-enclosed because of his history of childhood sexual abuse: he has no friends or lover, and does work that doesn’t require communication with people. There was no suggestion of reconciliation, only the

change of power structure and the transformation of the persecutor. However, as I explained earlier, what really caused BLUE's trauma was not the stepfather's behavior but his mother's distrust and his own subsequent doubts about what had happened to him and whether he had consented to, or even enjoyed the sex. To be clear, I'm not trying to defend TOM's behaviours, but to adapt Ravenhill's method to project the dilemma onto the audience. I want to blur the boundaries of the victims. When BLUE finally tells GREEN, he is not forgiving TOM, but pities him. TOM, the symbol of the authoritarian governmental machine, now is impotent. During sex, they are both fatigued and this allows BLUE to offer explanations for what TOM did to him as the impulse of an authoritative conqueror which is already obsolete.

As I explained, those who support the KMT in Taiwan are known as the pan-blue camp; many of them had also encountered oppression during the era of the KMT's authoritarianism, but they still chose to trust this party or support the Republic of China. In today's political climate in Taiwan, these people who were once oppressed were considered 'not harmed enough' or 'not qualified to call themselves victims' because of their political stance. So, I intend to let BLUE take part of the political responsibility. This may sound unjust, but it follows Arendt's analysis, that every governmental assumes responsibility for the past government's actions. Every nation bears responsibility for its past and its actions. Even if a revolutionary government categorically rejects any contractual relationship with the previous government, it has to bear the consequences of all the actions of the past government; in this sense, we usually bear the sins of our fathers, just as we are sheltered by them. Arendt stresses that this is not the same as being guilty of their crimes legally or morally, just as we don't take their merits as our own (Arendt, 2003: 149-150). Because in here it's not about justice or injustice, it's about how to survive for the rest of his life; therefore, BLUE bears TOM's sins, but doesn't inherit them, and this allows him to finally reach

a certain level of reconciliation with himself: 'I found him so old and so impotent, he doesn't know what to do to with the unhappiness deep inside, so he need pills to help him to... get there, you know. It makes me sad. (*Beat*) It's like a loop, and I'm so sick of it. Because it reminds me that maybe we are not actually so different' (245). Thus, BLUE becomes able to tell GREEN, 'I just want to start all over now. It's like I spent too much time making up for my fuck-up childhood already'(245).

In scene 18, the TV shows the news that MARK surrendered and detonated a bomb in the police office, during which TOM was killed. The reason I let MARK take all the responsibility again, is because he is also a cause of the disintegration of this family. LILIAN and MARK symbolize the survivors of the previous generation who fought against the authoritarian government, but the long-term persecution and opposition changed the trajectory of their lives. This led to MARK's imprisonment and broke up the family in the first place. After being released from prison, no-one remembers him, just like countless political prisoners in Taiwan. Government files are kept secret for many years and many of their letters home have been published in recent years, but most of the stories have been forgotten. When MARK accepted LILIAN's offer to find his work in the government building, it's like his life ended and he needs the old photos in his pocket to remind himself of the meaning of existence, rather than letting his parents go and himself be forgotten again. However, in scene 17, MARK meets GREEN in the parliament building, as at the beginning of this play. She tells him that she is going to burn the whole building down and asks MARK if he will stop her? MARK answers that he won't, confessing that he longes to go back to the prison, because the outside world is so uncomfortable for him, and he wants to take responsibility for his children. Here, I would like to quote Alain Badiou to discuss the possibility of how to construct a new subjectivity: he argues that the subject refers to the decision and will, through the process of incorporation into a

‘body-of-truth’ with material existence. This procedure of determination is what Badiou calls ‘subjectivation’ (Badiou, 2010: 229-234). Then Badiou discusses the ‘event’ that created an ‘eventual site’, and how to think (independently) about the experience and understand the logic of those changes. Different subjects may undergo different changes through events; the first kind of subject denies and suppresses change and returns to the past. This is the ‘reactive subject’ (represented by TOM and JAILOR). The second type of subject may express itself through declarations to establish a new faith. This is the ‘obscure subject’ (represented by LILIAN and ANDY). The last type is faithful to change, maintaining the continuity of this change, and not establishing a universally stable order. This is the ‘faithful subject’ (Badiou, 2009: 45-48, 62-63, 79-88) and this is the direction I want my characters (GREEN and BLUE) to take. Badiou emphasizes that the position of ‘faithful subject’ is weak and rare: refusing to rationalize itself, and refusing to define truth in the universal manner. This weak position is also the ‘queer position’ I adapted from Ravenhill, as well as the position I believe every individual should maintain in a democratic society to prevent the system be destroyed; through sharp thoughts, and constantly re-telling stories of the past by way of addendum (Badiou, 2003: 52).

Therefore, when BLUE and GREEN finally watch him on the news, sitting at the dining table beside news pictures of LILIAN and TOM, BLUE said: ‘It’s like a family reunion. It’s been so long.’ (251). GREEN puts the old photo on the side of the table which implies that he has won his position at home again; the broken relationship between family members has been repaired, if only a little. At the same time, LILIAN is giving a speech to mourn her husband. In this speech, she gave a picture of beautiful democratic composition with TOM heroically sacrificing himself to protect it. As she condemns violence as terrorism, the audience can feel she’s still campaigning for the role of mayor. LILIAN represents the problematic face of

contemporary democracy, as Geoffrey Brennan and Loren Lomasky describe in *Democracy and Decision: The Pure Theory of Electoral Preference* (1997). They argue that when people go to vote, they are not to change the result of the election, because statistics show that the probability of an individual vote having an impact on the election results is less than the probability of encountering a traffic accident on the way there.

In *The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies* (2010), Bryan Caplan analyses rational reasons for voting, which are not about the policies, but emotional satisfaction. This is divided into four types of bias: ‘antiforeign bias’, ‘make-work bias’, ‘antimarket bias’ and ‘pessimistic bias’. Caplan states that by voting, such voters can obtain great emotional satisfaction from identifying with others of the same type. Because their votes cannot effect the result, they do not feel guilty or worried that they might lead to bad policies. Caplan calls this the ‘rational irrationality’ of voters. LILIAN has mastered the psychology of voters, so she is always tactically correct; the number of invitations she receives from TV programmes shows how popular she is with the public. When MARK reminds her of her earlier ideals, she denies everything; when she needs an ally in the party, she does not hesitate to dedicate herself to DAVE. She marries a high-ranking police officer (TOM), who was once on the opposite side; and for the sake of a perfect public image, chose not to believe the words of her own son. LILIAN represents the ideal collapse of the previous generation and symbolizes the inevitable corruption of those who hold power. However, the main reason behind this is that the public in a democratic society does not desire to be responsible. They turn a deaf ear to unfavourable facts, and worship a fallacy if it sounds fascinating. Who can satisfy their illusions, who is their master? Those who try to destroy their illusions will become their enemy: they shoot the messenger (Miessen, 2010: 32). Their

irrationality makes these voters worse than ignorant, because they can easily reach misguided consensus and fiercely demand the fulfillment of their political goals. Democracy has an inherent externality, in that an irrational person not only harms themselves but also affects others (Caplan, 2007: 3-4; 20-21). Even worse, as shown in the play, with voting and direct politics give way to fund-raising tribal politics, the essence of democratic politics has been eroded by aggressive advertising, special interest funds, polling and target group-oriented strategies.

Jason Brennan in *The Ethics of Voting* (2011) appeals to those who lack professional knowledge not to vote, because they are not well-informed. The biggest hidden concern of contemporary democracy is the possibilities of autocracy brought about by the majority. This kind of dictatorship may be more terrible than the past one-man dictatorship. Capitalism has intensified people's emphasis on material enjoyment, no longer caring about the fate of the society or the nation. This is exactly what is happening in Taiwan: political figures can be unscrupulous in order to be elected, setting aside morality, striving for ways to gain visibility. They deliberately please their people, cease to provide advice or guidance and lose their professionalism. I want to offer my audience a chance to deliberately think about whether we really want our democratic politics to be like? Do we really want to shape politicians into commodities that always please most of the crowd? Or do we want to carry on the violence on the streets? Democracy is never perfect. Its procedures are sometimes manipulated by elites and may not always reflect the people's intentions and true interests. As Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) reminds us, the biggest crisis of democracy is those attacking 'formal democracy' in the name of 'substantial democracy' (60). However, people easily forget that 'formal democracy' is a form of security to prevent dictatorship and to produce 'substantial democracy'. As Badiou points out, people who support

‘substantial democracy’ often believe that they have some kind of near-truth idea, but if they do not recognize the ephemeral nature of truth, then the emancipatory politics brought about by the revolution will not work (Badiou, 2010: 246-48).

The play ends with the audience watching the twins joking and feeding each other with their mother’s signature recipe; which symbolizes the restoration of the Family and makes it return to its proper function as families should believe in each other unconditionally and take care of each other; and this is what I think the nationals who are all in the same community should do, rather than being torn apart by political understanding. Only in this way can I see hope again in both of them. Therefore, the citizen of an ideal democratic society must combine ‘independent thinking’ and being a ‘faithful subject’. This thinking subject is as Edward Said described in *Representations of the Intellectual* (1996), in which he defines the role of intellectual as outsiders, amateurs, and people who disrupt the status quo. Their task is to eliminate stereotypes and reductive categories that restrict human thinking and communication (xi); it’s a relentless and also lonely position, but also the only position from which to build the critical proximity to benefiting from others and differences (Miessen, 2010: 201-207). Maybe these queer subjects are a new collective “community” as Isaiah Berlin advocates: ‘we have multiple allegiances, belong to many different communities, and understand the experience of conflicting roles’ (quoted in Gray 1996: 103). It might be the bridge of the interactions between individuals and politicians and create stability and a more reasonable way to deal with competition and conflict between ethnic groups (Varshney, 2002: 3-15; Chirot & McCauley, 2012: 177-178).

Conclusion

At the point of submitting this thesis, almost five years will have passed since the Sunflower Movement protest took place in Taiwan (2014). In the judgment of the Supreme Court in 2018, those who occupied the parliament building or were otherwise involved were acquitted; the Cross-strait Service Trade Agreement that caused this protest was suspended; and in the general election of 2016, the anti-China party (DPP) won an unprecedented victory and replaced by the president and the majority in parliament. It seems the movement is justified and accepted by Taiwanese society; most people seem to have forgotten or don't care anymore. However, it still disturbs me to remember those images of young protesters standing on the podium in congress shouting nationalist slogans and spraying 'When dictatorship becomes a reality, revolution is an obligation' on the walls. Although I don't think my country is dictatorial, I am able to understand their anxiety because they are fighting against the shadow of authoritarian China. The trade agreement they opposed was actually part of the 'One China' policy or the 'Chinese United Front', which China wants to force Taiwan to accept. They were extremely confident that fighting the totalitarian invasion is indisputably correct. However, this ideology of being a hero or a saviour authorized by public opinions reminds me of Fascism, and its obvious anti-institutional tendency to ignore political communication and connection, which may eventually undermine the procedural justice of an ideal democracy and the rule of law.

Unfortunately, my worries seem to have come true. After the Sunflower Movement, a new wave of social movements raged violently on the streets of Taiwan. There is opposition to the revision of the Labour Standards Act, opposition to the deletion of pensions, groups against nuclear power, groups in support of gay marriage and groups against gay marriage. Dissatisfied people objecting to different governmental policies surrounded or tried to break into governmental buildings and

resulted in many governmental units being surrounded by barricades and roadblocks. When people disagree with the government, they are more inclined to confront them than attempt to negotiate: the mutual trust between the representative government and the people who chose them seems to be permanently damaged. The only thing that has been strengthened by opposing the China-Taiwan trade agreement is the subtext behind the movement: the sentiment of ‘Taiwanese independence’ and the ideology of being ‘anti-China/anti-communist’ as its opposite. Worse still, after the anti-China government took power in 2016, the cross-strait relationship faltered. With Taiwan’s growing economic strength and influence, China exerted many pressures and restrictions on Taiwan’s international identity and domestic economy. *The Times* used the title ‘Bully in Beijing’ on 3rd January 2019 and the article covered the fact that within the past two years, five countries have broken diplomatic relations with Taiwan and established relations with China, which led to only seventeen countries remaining that recognise Taiwan’s sovereignty. China is also putting pressure on international enterprises such as Western airlines or hotel groups to list Taiwan as “Taiwan (China)” as part of implementing the ‘One China’ policy. Because of the strength and size of the Chinese market, very few companies will be willing to offend its government. Moreover, China continued to veto Taiwan’s participation in international activities, organizations or conferences, and used many means to restrict tourism and impose economic sanctions on Taiwan.

As a relatively small country, and under such pressure, Taiwanese society has become fragmented. In the recent national mayoral and parliamentary election (24th November 2018), things were turned upside down. The pro-China party (KMT) had achieved a comprehensive victory, winning fifteen mayoral elections (out of 23), became the majority in parliament, and expected to win back the president position in 2020. Ironically, during this election, the KMT candidates called for the people to

vote to become economically dependent on China's route, which can be understood as an extension of the trade agreement that was opposed by the Sunflower Movement. Everyone in Taiwan knows that China's ultimate goal is to unify Taiwan with the mainland, as Chinese President Jin-Ping Xi stated in the *Message to Compatriots in Taiwan* (2019), he will resolve the Taiwanese issue during his tenure, and publicly announced that China will not give up the possibility of unification by force. When the Taiwanese contemplate the vast Chinese market and orders, rich job opportunities, generous treatment and similar language and culture, on the one hand, they feel tempted to cooperate; and on the other, they are scared. The newest poll made by Mainland Affairs Council in August 2018, shows the first intersection as "as soon as to unify" 4.5% over the "as soon as to declare independence" 4.1%. The changes in identity over the past few years is like a state of schizophrenia. Although politicians from both parties promised to maintain the 'status quo', which seems supported by most Taiwanese now, this 'status' assumes that changes in cross-strait relations will not significantly affect living conditions and that there will be no war. However, the truth is that this is not decided by Taiwan anymore. Taiwan has lost her right to define the relationship between the two sides. This became the greatest excuse for the anti-China party to further provoke Taiwanese nationalistic resentment of foreign aggression; in order to win the domestic election, 'Taiwan independence' has been used as a powerful spiritual calling for patriots, youths and locals. The tension in society has become more serious, because there seems to be less and less room for rational discussion or compromise. Public opinion has become a dangerous tool that politicians can use, especially when people use violent means to fight for what they want. Rational voting seems to be getting further and further away, and the votes are either more emotion-oriented or interest-oriented. I call this the democratic retrogression in Taiwan.

The core cause of the retrogression is the loss of national identity, which refers to the spiritual activity of a person who ‘confirms that he belongs to that country and what kind of country it is.’ This kind of ‘confirmation and attribution to the country’ is not only a nominal issue such as ‘I am Chinese/I am a Taiwanese/I am a Chinese and also a Taiwanese’, but substantive questions such as ‘My country is a country such as...’ (See Jiang, 1997). Therefore, national identity is not only about what we know, but also about what kind of country we want and why. As a national of the Republic of China, I’m not that interested in Taiwanese independence or unification with the mainland, but rather the shared history and memory on this island. I understand them and do not doubt that I am a Taiwanese. I believe that pursuing mutual understanding and setting goals in a civilized way is the purpose of the Republic of China/Taiwan’s move towards democratization. However, our current identity involves sensitive issues as like the abolition of the Republic of China or cross-strait reunification, and there is no way for rational discussion between the two opposing camps. There will always be supporters of each party who will use boycotts or destruction to bypass legal procedures or policies. The Sunflower Movement is only a single prominent example of this conflict. It seems that we can’t find a better method to persuade each other, but rather delay the decision over and over again.

When I was struggling to find a solution to this question, I accidentally found a proper answer in Simon Sinek’s TED speech, when he explained how game theory works in an infinite game and a finite game. Sinek explains there are no winners or losers in an infinite game; therefore, people didn’t need to defeat any opponents, but rather make the game last as long as possible. I have tried to apply this model to politics: those people eager to use violence or conflict to pursue their political ideas are doing so because they are trying to win a finite game i.e. to fulfil a purpose, stop a bill or even to win a war. These players’ behaviours are based on their personal

interests, such as how to persuade the other player to surrender or quit. Therefore, when they achieved these things, they behave like victors. However, we can imagine in reality that if a pro-China bill is blocked by violent actions, it would be hard to judge whether this is good for the whole country or not. Sinek recommends that we play an infinite game. It must be recognized that unlike other democratic countries, Taiwan is unfortunately a place where identity might actually perish at any time, as if we are constantly competing in a war, which we are not fighting to win, but to survive. I'm not implying that if we were ruled by China, life would be dangerous for Taiwanese people. However, the political system and freedom of speech we enjoy will definitely be replaced, and our national identity irrevocably wiped out.

We are looking for an identity through which we can present ourselves to the world. Rather than reluctantly seeking common ground, to find the common differences can also serve our purposes and be much easier. In other words, the best way to represent what we are is to present what we are 'not'. We won't be our opponents, so it's important to distinguish the characters of them and us (such as 'My country is not a one-party dictatorship'). And we should draw conclusions from history. Just as Taiwanese social movements pursued the democratization of political progress in different periods, as progress gradually moving towards peace, rationality, and non-violence. We might say of ourselves that 'My country is a country that won't use violence on innocent people'; this might be the first step in constructing a new sense of national identity. If every Taiwanese can think and judge from the perspective of pursuing an infinite game and have a basic understanding of our history perhaps Taiwan will eventually lose its sense of anxiety at losing subjectivity.

This is what I want to do in the practice work *Voting and Fucking*: to remind Taiwanese audiences what the real cause of political chaos in a democratic society is: the people themselves. The media may be full of false or overblown news and

politicians may be full of lies, but if audiences and voters do not take responsibility for their decisions of engagement with politics, there is no way to change. By repeatedly experiencing the violent political incidents that have occurred in our history, I hope to build a contradictory assembly for the Taiwanese, considering how it differs from other Asian countries such as China, North Korea and Vietnam that still maintain one-party dictatorships, and different again from Malaysia, Singapore and Cambodia that have been governed by a single party for a long time. The history of democratization in Taiwan took many years and many sacrifices to establish a unique society that we have. This shaped our identity as what the Taiwanese should be, and what kind of government we want to be ruled by. This is also based on our own memories, including those which are cruel and painful. We should realize that those freedoms and rights we share do not come from nowhere, but from martyrs and predecessors that went before us. However, equally importantly, I think we need to avoid over-imagining or perfecting those dissidents through rose-tinted glasses. This can be related to Francis Fukuyama's argument in *The End of History* (1992), in which Fukuyama argues that after the Cold War, American-style democracy which defeated the Soviet Union became the best system of mankind. Many sub-colonies followed the example of the United States, including Taiwan. Taiwan was proud to participate in the rise of US hegemony and had contempt for the communist regime adopted by China. No one expected that things would be as they are now. So, we should realize that democracy is just a political system, not the answer to everything or the perfect choice in every circumstance. We choose it in the hope that the people of Taiwan won't be treated as slaves by the ruling class anymore, and everybody can equally enjoy their individual freedom. Its true value comes from the gradual evolution from fierce violent conflicts to the experience of peace. This is why I juxtapose past and present time and space in this play, so as to require the audience to

figure out the inherited political contents, and what mistakes we should avoid, not to become some kind of dictator that we once tried so hard to defeat. And my play focuses on the event using violence as a way to implement civil rights and force the audience to reflect on what democracy should be like in Taiwan. Are we really qualified to be called a democratic country?

In the process of exploring these political facts around Taiwan, I realized that in the past decade, doubts about the execution and credibility of democratic systems and the worries of the rising populist ideology (two themes at the core of my play) had intensified and become a worldwide issue. For example, in 2016, old-fashioned democratic Britain chose to leave the European Union via the Brexit referendum. However, the politicians who advocated the referendum are unable to bear the consequences of having to leave the EU, thus causing great confusion in the country. In 2017, the United States had chosen an untypical president who is not from a traditional bipartisan political elite family, Donald Trump. Trump has spread populist ideas such as ‘Make American great again’ and was supported by many grassroots civilians. And in January 2019, in the series of Yellow Vests movement in France clashes broke out in several places where the protests were held, such as the Place de la Bastille and the Republique square. Police used tear gas and water cannon to disperse the masses, and people fought back with stones. In other cases, such as the victories of right-wing populist parties in Italy, Hungary or Germany, which are mostly an expression of hatred for refugees and immigrant problems, I’m not trying to make an academic analysis of international politics or local confrontation under the impact of globalization. However, when we think about Fukuyama’s ‘best system of mankind’ or ‘the end of history’, all the relevant concepts seem doubtful and untrustworthy.

What caused this? The modern democratic system might far surpass the imagination of its original architects. The rapid economic and social changes caused by globalization have made society more diverse and have created demands for recognition of groups that were originally ignored by mainstream society, which are the queers in my theory. These demands have caused fierce objections from other groups, who have a sense of loss of status and being replaced. These groups began to feel that their identity – whether ethnic, religious, sexual, gender or economical – was not sufficiently recognized. Therefore, those people became angry, afraid of losing their identities and accusing the political elites of ignoring them. The democratic society is breaking into fragments, divided according to increasingly narrow identities. This poses a threat to the possibility of social deliberation and collective action as a whole. Added to the wide use of the Internet, it has become easy to exchange information as never before. This has enabled the numbers of certain groups to quickly build consensus, indicating their positions online, and directly connecting with the politicians they support. This allows many people to think (erroneously) inside the echo chamber as their views represent most of the public opinion, and so not willing to give in. They didn't suspect what if this 'consensus' goes wrong? What if they bring themselves and others into constant conflict, who is responsible for the outcome?

This shows a fundamental problem of today's democracy, which requires every participator to be responsible for their choice. This can easily become equivalent to no-one being responsible. This system empowers its people and it can be difficult to take control back. As Plato says in *The Republic* the ideal monarch can't be selected through a democratic system, just as a ship needs to be led by a captain and medical treatment needs doctors. Rousseau also argues in *The Social Contract* that a truly strict democratic system did not exist in the past and will not exist in the future; he

believes democracy is too dependent on human virtue and wisdom and that these two things are rare in any era. On the other side, as the ruling legitimacy of politicians comes from the voters directly, they will unavoidably continue to please those voters, especially with the rise of the internet which means that public opinions can be more efficiently assembled. Therefore, many politicians utilize empty slogans that can provoke the feelings of the most civilians ('fight for the economy' or 'let the world see us'). In today's democratic countries, there are many politicians who have become like entertainment stars because their source of power comes from 'entertained voters', rather than dealing with the difficult issues of ruling the country (diplomacy, economics, national defence, laws, etc.). Similarly, more and more Taiwanese politicians are commoditizing themselves on the internet, learning to be a Youtuber or sending tweets on Twitter every few hours.

To conclude, in the context of Taiwanese development of democracy, I confirmed that 'democracy' still has an irreplaceable advantage over 'Autocracy'. Letting civilians vote has an important role in establishing 'ruling legitimacy' and preventing the state machine from harming innocent civilians. Therefore, although there are shortcomings and doubts about this system, I adapt Ravenhill's answer in the process of confronting capitalism: when we are unable to find a better system to replace it, we can only endure with it, improve it and make ourselves survivors. The political practice of citizens depends on the development of their individual sense of responsibility and judgment. Without these, democracy is only a formalized mechanism that can be operated by any person who owns it. So the question is, what should we do to make ourselves deserve a better democracy? In *Voting and Fucking*, through the path of the Queer's Journey, I try to combine brutal historical memories with personal traumatic experiences, to form a unique subjectivity with worthy traits that can be shared by all of us. Therefore, civic awareness that conforms with

collective national identity through the shared experience and history must be the first step for Taiwanese to establish our community: respecting differences, understanding the contexts of different political choices and most importantly, abandoning the idea of violently persuading others to accept anyone's claims. To produce a more suitable and sustainable set of democratic political models for today's Taiwan, these basic ideas of civic consensus should be the most crucial parts for us to pursue a better democratic society, and allow us to overcome internal disputes and survive in the encirclement of strong external threat.

Voting and Fucking is aimed at the current situation in Taiwan and hopes to provide Taiwanese audience with an opportunity for self-reflection, and perhaps to awaken the enthusiasm of Taiwanese political theatre as seen in the 1980s. The tradition of Taiwanese political playwrights have always been flexible to respond to the needs of the audience through all means, they introduced new Western theatrical concepts and combining traditional works, using plays from other cultures in translation to adapt and improve the potential of our theatrical environment; therefore, I observed that the atmosphere in Taiwanese political theatre is flooded with the imitations of Chi, Wei-Jan's style trash-talk comedies. They are ironic and sometimes brilliant, but I felt this kind of political theatre is ineffective to solve the real problem in front of my eyes. The immediacy and ubiquity of the Internet era have caused a large amount of information to be easily grasped and disseminated by people, but rather than a more informed populace, this also leads to swiftness, shallowness, credulity and a tendency to choose the content that is most similar to one's own ideology, and no longer believing in professional and expert opinions. The transformation of the people's knowledge structure has caused today's populist social movements and created a phenomenon that inhibits disagreement or rational discussion: 'Disagreeing with independence' means 'disagreeing with Taiwan' means

‘agreeing with Chinese Communist party’ means ‘enemy’. This approach is not essentially different from the past totalitarian government, but creates new taboos and threats to coerce people.

The first time I read Ravenhill’s works, which were anti-war and anti-capitalist, I found what I have been looking for. After analyzing his dramaturgy in detail, I have taken a set of writing methods as I call the ‘Queer’s Journey’ which I think can be used to respond to the identity crisis and the problems within the democratic structure. This brings a reflection from the perspective of queers, to depict the collision between marginal characters and the social structure itself, taking a more direct, more provocative attitude to ask the audience to reflect upon the violence they witness. However, unlike other playwrights, such as Edward Bond or Sarah Kane, Ravenhill doesn’t use violence as a strong weapon to force people to change their environment; in most of his plays, his characters are victims of violence and he asks whether people should suffer like this. He makes us understand the cause and effect between each character’s choice and consequence. They retain a part of their dignity and humanity. Ravenhill always retains a path to happiness for them, because he believes that my group and the ‘Other’ can find a way to coexist in mutual trust and support. This is what I think Taiwan’s political theatre and audience need to learn.

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Appendix #1

Glossary and list of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full name	Remark
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan	Formed in 1986, Taiwan's first local political party.
KMT	Kuomintang; Chinese Nationalist Party	Formed in 1919, the sole ruling party of the Republic of China from 1928 to 2000.
ROC	Republic of China	The sovereign state based in China between 1912 to 1949; in 1949 moving its capital to Taipei and controlling only Taiwan and other smaller islands.
PRC	People's Republic of China	The successor of the Chinese regime after 1949, established by the Communist Party of China

Appendix #2

Timeline gives dates for key political and theatrical events of Republic of China

Year	Political Event	Theatre Event
1947	February 28 Incident: Officers attempted to arrest a woman selling cigarettes illegally, a Taiwanese man is killed, and as a result mass riots break out all over the island. The government finally suppressed people by force, the total number of deaths is around 18,000 to 28,000.	
1949	Chinese Civil War: The ROC relocates its government to Taipei, a total of around 1.2 million Chinese migrated to Taiwan before and after.	
1950s	White Terror: The KMT implemented martial law, and imprisoned Taiwan's intellectual and social elite to consolidate the regime.	Chinese Literature and Art Prize Committee established by the KMT; encouraging the creations of anti-Communist or promote traditional Chinese culture.
1960s		Man-Gui Li advocated the 'little theatre movement' in Taiwan, holed the 'Youth drama exhibition' and 'World drama exhibition'. Introducing the modern Western theatre culture and system to Taiwan.
1971	Withdraws from the United Nation: The United Nations recognizes the People's Republic of China as the government of China; the	

	United States formally established diplomatic relations with PRC and ended its military alliance with ROC in 1978.	
1979	The Formosa Incident: Taiwanese elites asked for the lifting of the ban on newspaper publications and political parties. Afterwards, the leaders were arrested and imprisoned, but the public began to show sympathetic and supportive to the protesters.	Yi-Wei Yao promoted the 'Experimental drama exhibition' from 1980-1984, had five rounds of exhibitions. Gave birth to many troupes with a big influence in theatrical history, such as Lan-ling Theatre, Performance Workshop, Ping-Fong Acting Troupe.
1986	The DPP was formed as the first alternative party in Taipei.	The 'Postmodern Theatre' phenomenon was dominated by many amateur small theatre troupes; in various styles of Avant-garde to gather public attention to social and political issues.
1987	Martial law lifted from Taiwan by president Ching-Kuo Chiang, who died in next year. The successor to the vice president Teng-Hui Lee.	
1989	Nan-Rong Zheng's self-immolation: Taiwan social movement advocater and politic commentator Nan-Rong Zheng was summoned for a suspected rebellion, but refused to be arrested and ignited gasoline in his editor's office.	<i>A City of Sadness</i> , the first film reflecting the 'February 28 th Incident' in Taiwan, directed by Xiao-Xian Hou; it used the <i>Song of the Covered Wagon</i> as the movie theme song.
1990	The Wild Lily student movement: College students across the country gathered to protest against	

	<p>the country's Constitution was not implemented, and fight for direct suffrage.</p> <p>President Lee accepted their propositions and granted all the political prisoners regained their freedom.</p>	
1996	<p>Taiwan's first direct presidential election, and Lee won the re-election.</p>	<p>Qi-Yuan Tian published an open letter to describe the disappearance or inclusion of the little theatres.</p> <p>The economic progressing caused the audiences' taste to change, and made theatre has to consider the box office.</p> <p>Wei-Ran Chi with his sarcastic 'New-language' dramaturgy gained unprecedented success with both theatrical critics and audience reviews. It also symbolizes the advent of a market-oriented political theatre era.</p>
2000	<p>The first peaceful transition of the regime to DPP, Shui-Bian Chen won the presidential election and the re-election in 2004.</p>	
2001	<p>China joined the World Trade Organization, further marginalized Taiwan's international status.</p>	
2008	<p>Because of the reduced economic growth Ying-Jeou Ma won the presidency and the majority in parliamentary seats for KMT, and won the re-election in 2012.</p>	<p>The pioneer of Taiwanese political theatre, Mo-Lin Wang uses <i>Wilderness</i> (2011), to discuss about the significance of political</p>

	In the state of the world economic recession, the regime began to seek the possibility of economic cooperation with China.	theatre in Taiwan from a reflection point of view, and with pessimistic self-denial as all for nothing.
2014	The Sunflower Movement: People against the KMT government passed the trade agreement with the PRC in the absence of supervision. The crowds occupied the congress building for 24 days. Eventually, the government gave in and the bill was shelved.	
2016~	Ing-Wen Tsai with the majority of DPP parliamentary seats won the presidential election, and the re-election in 2020.	Wan-Ting Shen and Hui-Min Ruan's <i>Siro Heroes - Taiyuan Events</i> (2017), with government subsidies, the political writing began to criticize the KMT/ROC as unjust foreign power which hinders Taiwanese people from pursuing freedom and progress.